The Nation.

THE POPULIST MOMENT?
The Editors

IMPEACHABLE OFFENSES
John Nichols

HARRY POTTER'S MURKY MORALS
Lakshmi Chaudhry

GÜNTER GRASS'S WAR
Andreas Huyssen

PURPLE AMERICA

THE DEMOCRATS' 50-STATE STRATEGY REKINDLES THE GRASSROOTS

BOB MOSER

AUGUST 13/20, 2007
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Our Veterans Have Spoken…

New York City

■ "The Other War" by Chris Hedges and Laila Al-Arian [July 30/Aug. 6], paints a horribly inaccurate picture of civilian deaths in Iraq and the experiences of many veterans interviewed for this article. That innocent Iraqi civilians are caught in the conflict's crossfire is a great tragedy, one felt deeply by American service members. Difficult, and sometimes questionable, decisions are made in the fog of war. However, this article does the US military and *The Nation*'s readership a disservice with its sensationalistic and unethical reporting methods.

The Nation violated the trust of our organization, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), and many of the service members interviewed. Reporters told our members that the focus of this article would be their experience in Iraq generally, not civilian casualties specifically. Many of the veterans spent hours talking to Ms. Al-Arian and shared deeply personal recollections on a variety of subjects, only to have their experiences misrepresented and/or isolated. The most graphic recollections were removed from context and used to bolster the authors' preconceived conclusion about the patterns and frequency of civilian deaths. Critical facts were obscured or omitted entirely.

The reporting tactics employed by Ms. Al-Arian were questionable and even nefarious. One of our members wrote, "I did a two-hour interview with Laila and she cherry-picked one tiny anecdote for the piece. I felt used by the whole process." Another interviewee repeatedly asked the interviewer to clarify the definition of Iraqi "civilian." The reporter's refusal to provide that clarification led to a complete misrepresentation of the circumstances they discussed.

In the interviews, veterans described thoughts and responses that were specific to particular circumstances on the battlefield. In the article, those sentiments were portrayed as being the norm. As a result of this selective representation of the facts, egregious practices by service members in Iraq were described in the article as common. For instance, the use of the term "haji" is mentioned in the piece, but the reporters never state that the military banned the use of the term once its use in a derogatory manner became widespread. One of our members explained that to the reporter, but that detail, like so many other relevant ones, did not make it into the published piece.

Our organization was shocked and extremely disappointed by the article's tactics and low standards. The men and women bravely spoke out because they were concerned about the war and its effects on all people in Iraq—military and civilian. They put themselves and their families at tremendous risk by choosing to participate in this article. The veterans quoted trusted *The Nation*, and that trust was betrayed. *The Nation* now has a sensational story that is sure to gain significant attention and sell numerous copies.

After this experience, it is unlikely that IAVA will choose to work with *The Nation* in the future. And we strongly recommend that all 1.6 million veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan exercise the same reservation and caution in any dealings with this magazine.

While not excusing any clearly criminal behavior, we must all guard against blaming this new generation of veterans for the terrible and tragic circumstances in which they've occasionally found themselves. Above all, a responsible investigation into the treatment of Iraqi civilians would consider how US troops ended up in the situations described. It would target the critical breakdowns in military and civilian leadership and accountability. Anyone who wants to write a serious piece about the ethical lapses of the US troops should start and end the article by putting blame where it belongs—on the politicians who sent our troops to war unprepared and without a clear mission.

Much as the Bush Administration cherry-picked intelligence to make the case for this war, *The Nation* cherry-picked the stories it reported to support predetermined conclusions. Your readers, our veterans and the Iraqi people deserve better.

PAUL RIECKHOFF
Executive director
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

HEDGES AND AL-ARIAN REPLY

New York City

■ Paul Rieckhoff's assertion that the fifty combat veterans who spoke out in our article were brave is correct. Many risked their careers and friendships to do so. Far from being "nefarious," we were clear that our investigation was focused on the treatment of Iraqi civilians.

In August 2006 we sent this description of our project to numerous veterans, including Rieckhoff: "*The Nation* seeks Iraq War Vets: *The Nation* magazine would like to interview Iraq War combat veterans. The focus of this in-depth, investigative story is Iraqi civilians caught up in the war zone."

Rieckhoff claims that "graphic recollections were removed from context." We were careful that each incident we described specified the person involved and the date and location of the event. Fact-checkers reviewed the transcripts to insure that the incidents were fairly represented. The fact-checkers and authors made follow-up calls to interviewees to reconfirm incidents and the context of those incidents.

Laila Al-Arian does not recall being asked to clarify who a "civilian" is for any interviewee. However, if the term was confusing for a member of the armed forces in Iraq, that bolsters the premise of our piece. Those interviewed described broad patterns of abuse that are the result of a mismanaged war and a failure to enforce proper rules of engagement.

A July 11 article by McClatchy reporter Nancy Youssef has confirmed that civilian deaths are "common." Pentagon sources revealed that US troops shot 429 civilians at checkpoints alone in the past year. As *The Nation* states in its editorial accompanying our article: "The problem is not a few 'bad apples'…but the occupation itself."

"The Other War" presents the unvarnished testimony of veterans. It does not lay blame on individuals. The killings and abuse of Iraqi civilians, nearly all veterans said, were perpetrated by a minority. The problem is that the culture of the occupation has allowed this minority to act with impunity and without constraint.

CHRIS HEDGES AND LAILA AL-ARIAN

OUR READERS WEIGH IN

Reno

■ I am the father of one of the veterans interviewed, Spc. Philip Chrystal, and I couldn't be prouder of him and all the other interviewees who have taken a risk by talking outside the military culture to tell an unknowing public the truth about what they saw in Iraq.

In almost daily contact with Phil when he was overseas, I can tell you that he was deeply affected by the experiences related in the article and by other events. While serving there, he was also fully aware that I was burying young men killed in Iraq—to date I have conducted three funerals for Iraq KIAs, and I've worked with the families of two Nevada Army National Guardsmen who were killed in Afghanistan (one of whom was Sgt. Patrick Stewart, a Wiccan who was denied a memorial plaque bearing the symbol of his faith until his wife, Roberta, sued in federal district court and the Veterans Administration settled).

Because of my activities on the home front, I echo what is being said by the veterans in the article and add that this country isn't taking adequate care of many of the families of those

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EDITORIALS

The Populist Moment?

So now it's official. The *New York Times* has announced that "economic populism" is the new flavor in politics, and Democrats are lapping it up. Don't we wish. We have mixed feelings, because the "populist" story has a perennial quality. It's the flower that blooms in the springtime of presidential election cycles, then shrivels suddenly. The country has arrived at an important political moment—possibly a watershed—but this moment does not yet belong to the people.

In Washington parlance, the historic meaning of populism has been corrupted and trivialized as a sentimental oddity. The word is now invoked by the press and campaign operatives to say, Hey, the politicians are talking like they might actually do something for the folks. How quaint. In a political system accustomed to serving powerful interests, putting people first has become a man-bites-dog news story.

The original populism, the agrarian revolt of the late nineteenth century, was creative and robustly defiant of entrenched power. Oppressed farmers, humble people in the bleakest circumstances, forged their own politics and audaciously took on Washington and Wall Street (read Lawrence Goodwyn's *The Populist Moment* to learn the full, amazing saga of this bottom-up rebellion). The populists failed in the end to acquire governing power, but their agenda ultimately changed the nation. It was rich in big ideas about how to use government to protect society from the depredations of concentrated wealth and corporate power. Populists created an intellectual seedbed that influenced the next fifty years of progressive reform, climaxing in the New Deal.

This is what's missing from the Democrats' "new" populism—the big ideas for fundamental change, the hardheaded analysis that confronts national decline in all its ugly manifestations. We know some Democrats yearn to begin this kind of broad-gauged assault on the status quo, and the new concern in party circles about income and wealth inequality is encouraging. But the party, and most presidential candidates, are still too shy on the big questions. Where is the party's comprehensive critique of taxation—not just the wildly reactionary rate structure but the corrupted federal tax code, which allows the wealthiest players to decide for themselves how much tax they will pay (see David Cay Johnston's devastating reports in the *New York Times* and *Perfectly Legal*, his shocking book)? What do Democratic candidates have to say about how to redeem government as a trustworthy agent for the general welfare and an equitable society? The government's loss of integrity and effectiveness is growing, and citizens know the degradation did not originate with George W. Bush. To restore reliable government, a reforming party will have to cut corporate power down to a size society can tolerate.

How would the next Democratic President set out to redeem a dysfunctional regulatory system? It is not enough to say he or she would appoint better people and tell them to obey the law. Regulatory agencies people once trusted, like the Food and Drug Administration, have been captured by the industries they are supposed to regulate.

The dismantling of financial regulation, likewise, did not begin with Bush I or II or even Ronald Reagan. It began in the late 1970s, when Democrats were in power. Are the Dems prepared to address their big mistakes and begin the hard task of re-regulating the banking and financial systems to protect the people from the familiar spectacles of outrageous gouging and unpunished crimes of fraud?

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If our nation is at a great turning point, an opening for momentous reforms, a party that seeks to win the governing majority cannot duck on any of these matters. We understand the hesitations; we are familiar with the obstacles. But to put it plainly, you cannot run on "populist" politics and count on robber barons to finance your campaigns. It might fool people for a season or two, but when nothing changes, they will punish the culprits.

Does a populist temperament still dwell in the American people—the fighting spirit to reclaim citizenship and self-government? We are sure it does, though these aspirations are buried under cultural distractions and elite propaganda. *The Nation* will do its best to revive and encourage the democratic ethos, because it is only the people who have the power to force change on political institutions, including the Democratic Party. Forget the words and slogans. Populism cannot be authentic unless it is driven by and for the people.

Fred Thompson, Neocon

The neoconservatives are not riding high these days. The Iraq War—their number-one cause—is a failure, and the public has turned on the war, George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, their top man in the Administration. Meanwhile, the so-called foreign policy realists appear to have the upper hand against the Administration's dwindling neocon cell in many internal policy squabbles. But the neocons are faring rather well when it comes to the presidential race. The leading GOP contenders are all die-hard fans of the war. And the newest star in the show—Fred Thompson, the former Republican senator from Tennessee, onetime lobbyist and TV actor who has all but officially announced his candidacy—might be the most neoconnish of all.

With gusto, Thompson embraced the second-favorite crusade of the neocons: Scooter Libby. For them, Libby has been a martyr of near-religious significance. Thompson, a prominent member of the Libby defense fund, called for Bush to pardon the former Cheney chief of staff. While doing so, Thompson repeatedly misstated core facts of the CIA leak case. Deriding special prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald, Thompson, who played a prosecutor on *Law & Order*, insisted that Valerie Plame Wilson was not covered by the Intelligence Identities Protection Act—though indeed she was. Following the neocon tradition of accusing the CIA of betraying national security interests, Thompson essentially charged that the agency and the Justice Department had conspired to set Libby up. He claimed that the CIA sent a known Democratic partisan—former Ambassador Joseph Wilson—to Niger and that upon his return Wilson "blasted" the Bush Administration. (Wilson, a career diplomat, was no partisan at the time of his 2002 trip, and he did not "blast" the Administration until nearly a year and a half after his mission.) No other GOP candidate was as true to the Libby cause as Thompson, who heartily applauded Bush's commutation of Libby's prison sentence.

In spirit, Thompson was a member of the Libby Lobby before it even existed—as a fierce advocate for a US invasion of Iraq. In October 2002, during his last months as a senator, Thompson voted for the measure authorizing the use of force. At the time, he

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COMMENT

was pitching the familiar argument: Saddam Hussein was packing WMDs, about to get nukes and in cahoots with Al Qaeda. He declared on CNN, "I don't want to get in too deeply, in terms of what the CIA has told the intelligence community, but…Director Tenet pointed out in great detail the extent to which Saddam had moved toward cooperation with Al Qaeda." Actually, Tenet had not done that. The CIA chief had publicly referred to "reporting of senior level contacts" between Al Qaeda and Baghdad without providing details (the CIA's analysts determined there was no definitive evidence linking Saddam and Osama bin Laden operationally). But for the neocons, the purported Al Qaeda connection was an article of faith, and Thompson was pushing this holy writ, hinting that he (as an intelligence committee member) knew more than he could openly say. Weeks ago, Thompson said that before the invasion the Administration had merely claimed that "there was clearly contact and a relationship [between Al Qaeda and Saddam's regime], but no one knew exactly what it meant." That was not how he depicted it in 2002.

After leaving the Senate in early 2003, Thompson did his bit for the war effort. He filmed an ad for a conservative group that supported the coming invasion. In it he stood before an American flag and drawled, "When people ask, What has Saddam done to us? I ask, What had the 9/11 hijackers done to us before 9/11?" When UN inspectors found no evidence that Saddam was developing nuclear weapons, Thompson pooh-poohed their work. He argued, like a neocon, that the United States, as the lone superpower, had to be willing to use force beyond immediate self-defense to protect itself and its interests.

Thompson has other neocon tics. Earlier this year, after the bipartisan Iraq Study Group had recommended a diplomatic initiative that would include attempts to negotiate with Iran and Syria, he cheered Bush for not doing so. He has blasted the UN and bashed France. ("We're…hopeful that, eventually, our ostrich-headed allies will realize there's a world war going on out there, and they need to pick a side.") He has hailed progress in Iraq. ("In Iraq, the healthcare and education statistics are even better. There are, of course, still many areas of life that need to improve…but we're moving in the right direction.")

Thompson has mostly been a loyal conservative, though as a senator he peeved right-wingers by supporting campaign finance reform and by voting for only one of the two impeachment counts against Bill Clinton. These days, he wants to extend Bush's tax cuts for the well-to-do. He calls for tort "reform." He favors the death penalty. He says he's opposed to abortion rights (although in 1991 he helped lobby for an abortion rights outfit and declared in 1994 he was opposed to criminalizing abortion), and he recently mocked those concerned about global warming.

Neocons have many good choices among GOP presidential wannabes. Senator John McCain has hung tight on the war. Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney has outdone Cheney by calling for doubling the size of the Guantánamo prison. And former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani has loaded his campaign with pro-Israel hawks, including godfather of the neocons Norman Podhoretz, who advocates attacking Iran. But Thompson has a strong claim on the neoconservative heart. If he ends up in the White House, the neocons will rise again. DAVID CORN

Harry Potter
And the Half-Baked Epic

Readers beware! Significant details, including the end, of the recently released Harry Potter book are discussed below. —The Editors

When *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the eagerly anticipated conclusion of J.K. Rowling's seven-part saga, was finally released on July 21, the critics weren't disappointed. The *New York Times*'s Michiko Kakutani praised the "epic showdown" as "deeply rooted in traditional literature and Hollywood sagas—from the Greek myths to Dickens and Tolkien to 'Star Wars.'" But great battles in fiction, especially of the caliber name-checked by Kakutani, are epic not merely in scale but also in moral content. Whether aimed at adults or children, they speak directly to the nature of good and evil and what is at stake when we choose between them. Most critics this past week didn't seem to notice that Rowling fails entirely to meet this key requirement. What we get instead is a moral fuzziness that parades as realism, innumerable references to a post-9/11 world coupled with throwaway and often derivative insights that never add up to a coherent moral vision.

In *Deathly Hallows*, we get a good look at the ultimate embodiment of evil, Lord Voldemort, who turns out to be essentially a Hitler wannabe with a penchant for racial purity, mass graves and general totalitarian mayhem. Painted in broad strokes, his brand of evil—revealed early in his habit of torturing, what else, rabbits—doesn't add up to much more than a rehashed, cartoonish version of tyranny that the reader can safely be relied on to despise. For all his cutting-edge terrorist strategy in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Voldemort finally reveals himself to be a cardboard imitation of an old-fashioned kind of baddie, like Tolkien's Sauron.

Rowling's ham-handed characterization of Voldemort is in stark contrast to her depiction of a far more insidious and contemporary kind of evil, one captured so brilliantly in the bright-eyed malice of Dolores Umbridge, the Grand Inquisitor in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. In the Ministry of Magic—originally led by Cornelius Fudge, who is later replaced by Rufus Scrimgeour in *Half-Blood Prince*—Rowling points her finger at elected officials hellbent on preserving their power at the expense of their citizens, wresting basic rights, eroding freedoms and manipulating information, all in the name of maintaining order. But in her final book, Rowling simply sweeps aside the multitude of the Ministry's sins in the wake of Voldemort's bloody coup. His far more spectacular crimes offer a good excuse to turn Scrimgeour into an unlikely hero of sorts. He's just one of the good guys, though a little unsavory in his methods, Rowling assures us.

If Rowling's take on evil is politically evasive and, in the final analysis, just plain uninteresting, her notion of good is no less obscure, best exemplified by the muddled characterization of her hero. Here's a 17-year-old who spends much of the book wallowing in the most unheroic of sentiments: resentment, suspicion, paranoia, self-pity and anger, but not of the outraged, impassioned kind that you might think a death-wielding Nazi

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would inspire. He's far too busy hating Hermione for breaking his wand or Dumbledore for leaving him in the lurch. Even the sight of desperate Muggle-borns being rounded up and "registered" to meet what will surely be an awful fate cannot shake Harry out of his self-pity. As the rest of the wizarding world teeters on the brink of catastrophe, what Harry really wants to know is: Did Dumbledore love me or what?

The personal is political and love is the ultimate good, or so Rowling insists. Dumbledore repeatedly assures his young protégé that his ultimate superpower—his mighty heart—will finally vanquish the Dark Lord. And yet Harry's love is every bit as personal and immediate as his other preoccupations. He loves his pals, various parental figures and his school, and it is for them that he takes the greatest risks. Unlike Hermione, he shows little compassion for anyone outside his immediate circle of friends, and certainly no interest in the larger issues at stake in the resistance against Voldemort. Yet Rowling reiterates the love mantra over and over again to make the fatuous—and disingenuous—distinction between good and evil. Voldemort, you see, doesn't have any friends, for to be good, one must love and be loved. If that were the sole criterion for goodness, even Nazis would make the grade.

For all Harry's whingeing, Rowling does redeem her hero toward the very end of the book. Cue final revelation, followed by spiritual epiphany and *voilà*—Harry learns to stop endlessly analyzing his life and embrace death in order to defeat Voldemort. Death has always been big in the *Harry Potter* series—Death Eaters, deathly hallows, horcruxes and, of course, an ever-mounting body count—since its looming shadow lends a sense of urgency and import. Yes, we all need to learn how to die, but Rowling is oddly coy when it comes to telling us what to die for. What has all this terrible destruction, loss and sacrifice been in service of?

Rowling's answer to this question, which has always been unconvincing, turns out in the end to be no less than damning. In her stinging critique of the *Harry Potter* series in 2003, author A.S. Byatt rightly observed, "Its values, and everything in it, are, as Gatsby said of his own world when the light had gone out of his dream, 'only personal.' Nobody is trying to save or destroy anything beyond Harry Potter and his friends and family."

Deathly Hallows is a sad confirmation of the same. The shallowness of Rowling's enterprise is revealed in the vapid little epilogue that seems inspired less by great fiction than B-list Hollywood scripts. Where the cataclysmic showdown in *The Lord of the Rings* leaves the Hobbits and Middle-earth irrevocably altered even in victory, the wizarding world merely returns to business as usual, restoring its most famous citizens to a life of middle-class comfort. At the end of this overly long saga, the reader leaves with the impression that what Harry was fighting for all along was his right—and now that of his children—to play Quidditch, cast cool spells and shop for the right wand. Or what George Bush would call "our way of life."

LAKSHMI CHAUDHRY

Lakshmi Chaudhry, a Nation *contributing writer, is a Puffin Foundation Writing Fellow at The Nation Institute.*

CALVIN TRILLIN

On the Latest Washington Scandal

All Washington, DC, is now atwitter
With talk about some deeds of David Vitter.
With sanctimony, he had always been
Prepared to cast folks out for any sin.
For him, the sanctity of marriage loomed
Above all issues. Gays, of course, were doomed,
And when Bill Clinton misbehaved, Dave's voice
Said resignation was the only choice.
So critics smiled, and backers were appalled
To learn Dave paid to get his ashes hauled.
Once more, for right-wing folks it really rankles
To see who's caught with pants around his ankles.
Who's next? Who knows? But some would take
the view
That sanctimony's often quite a clue.

Impeachable Offenses

Recently PBS's *Bill Moyers Journal* devoted a full hour to the subject of impeaching George W. Bush and Dick Cheney—the first such attention by a national network. The remarkable thing about the response was not its size or intensity. After visiting more than a dozen states to address the issue, I have come to understand the depth of the public's desire for accountability. But it was only after Moyers invited conservative legal scholar Bruce Fein and me to lay out not merely the specific grounds for impeachment but the historical rationale for applying the "heroic medicine"—the Founders' preferred cure for a constitutional crisis—that I fully understood the extent to which Americans recognize that this is about a lot more than the high crimes and misdemeanors of a regal President and his monarchical Vice President. The stakes are enormous: If Bush and Cheney are not held accountable, this Administration will hand off to its successors a toolbox of powers greater than any executive has ever held—more authority, concentrated in fewer hands, than the Founders could have conceived or would have allowed.

Among the thousands of responses after the program aired in mid-July, there was a steady theme: This is no longer a partisan issue. Inside the Beltway, the calculus these days rarely gets beyond the next election; but outside it there are tens of millions of Americans worried about the next generation—indeed, about the fate of the Republic. To be sure, there are Bush haters among their number, fierce partisans who—in an echo of the Republicans who a decade ago went after Bill Clinton—have adopted a "by any means necessary" approach to the goal of cutting short the Bush/Cheney tenure. But the national conversation in which we engaged

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COMMENT

after the Moyers program aired suggested that they are a minority of the 54 percent of Americans who tell pollsters it's time to open impeachment hearings on Cheney's misdeeds, and the only slightly smaller number who favor the process for Bush.

The Washington elites still try to dismiss the impeachment movement as an ill-considered reflexive reaction to a President Americans don't like and a Vice President they fear—or, worse yet, as some sort of partisan payback. But the plain truth is that most of those who responded to the Moyers discussion recognize that the point of impeachment is not the transitory crimes of small men but the long-term definition of great offices. Fein, an official in the Reagan Justice Department, and I come from different points on the ideological spectrum, but we agree that the Founders intended impeachment less as a punishment for officeholders than as a protection against the dangerous expansion of executive authority. If abuse of the system of checks and balances, lies about war, approval of illegal spying and torture, signing statements that improperly arrogate legislative powers to the executive branch, schemes to punish political foes and refusals to cooperate with Congressional inquiries are not judged as high crimes, the next President, no matter from which party, will assume the authority to exercise some or all of these illegitimate powers.

The burgeoning movement for impeachment is a rational response to a moment when polls tell us that roughly three-quarters of Americans think the country is headed in the wrong direction. This Administration has not just let Americans down; it has frightened them. A great many understand, intuitively or explicitly, that we are experiencing a constitutional crisis and that impeachment proceedings are the proper tonic. Unfortunately, key Democrats continue to mistake the medicine for the disease. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi still keeps impeachment "off the table"; she and her advisers fear that if they allow Judiciary Committee chair John Conyers to open impeachment hearings, it will rally the Republican base in defense of Bush and Cheney. History suggests she's wrong: Opposition parties that have pursued impeachment in a high-minded manner have, in every instance, maintained or improved their position in Congress and have usually won the presidency in the next election. Pelosi should step out of the way and let her colleagues restore the rule of law. More than a dozen have shown their desire to do so by co-sponsoring Representative Dennis Kucinich's articles of impeachment against Cheney.

Clearly, impeachment is not just around the corner; even Senator Russ Feingold's "relatively modest response" to the crisis—censure resolutions against Bush and Cheney—faces an uphill struggle. At this late stage, it will be difficult to turn the need for accountability into action on Capitol Hill. But even an impeachment effort that falls short lays down a historical marker; it tells Bush and Cheney and all those who succeed them that an executive branch that imagines itself superior to Congress and the rule of law will arouse popular fury.

George Bush, it is said, has begun to worry about his legacy. The rest of us should, too. No matter how unsuccessful we may think his tenure has been, it will leave a mark on the Republic. If that mark is of a presidency without limit or accountability, Bush and Cheney will have changed the country far more fundamentally than any of their predecessors. JOHN NICHOLS

Dangerous Privilege

It's time to do something about executive privilege.

Having stretched the Constitution to the snapping point, the White House now brandishes "executive privilege," talismanlike, to ward off discovery of its wrongdoing. White House counsel Fred Fielding not only refuses to provide specific evidence to Congressional committees investigating the firing of US Attorneys but makes the unprecedented claim that the President can block former advisers from appearing before Congress. Echoing an argument last heard in the infamous torture memo of August 2002, the President also claims unfettered control over federal criminal prosecutions—hence barring one way of challenging Fielding's startling arguments.

This obfuscation, though, is not merely an extension of the Administration's pet theory of monarchical executive power; it is also a calculated strategy to avoid accountability. The Administration knows that federal courts have long been reluctant to force secrets from the executive, and is thus willing to fight the House Judiciary Committee's contempt citations against Joshua Bolten and Harriet Miers. By playing hardball until the clock runs out on the Bush II era, the White House hopes to eliminate accountability for warrantless wiretapping, partisan manipulation of the Justice Department—and even torture. Worse, it sends the message to future Presidents that they can do the same.

The case for limiting executive privilege by a clear law does not rest on White House shenanigans alone. In fact, executive privilege is a vague concept that has metastasized in a short half-century. To prevent it from undermining democratic government, reform is urgently needed.

Start with the Constitution, which makes no mention of executive privilege. To the contrary, only Article I—listing Congress's powers—even mentions secrecy. Article II, describing the presidency, does not. It is not surprising that the branch of government worst structured for keeping secrets receives the sole constitutional power to do so, for the Constitution embodies a presumption toward disclosure. It mandates elections, which are mere farce without information about what a government does. And by constraining government power to muzzle criticism, the First Amendment deepens the constitutional tilt toward transparency. Nevertheless, Presidents since George Washington have exploited the absence of clear constitutional rules to withhold information. With the exponential growth of government after the New Deal and World War II, such inchoate and ill-defined claims suddenly became a potent weapon in the battle over separation of powers.

By the time of Bush II, the President's personal right to keep conversations with advisers confidential had morphed into a bottomless well of secrecy obscuring not only the Oval Office but the entire White House. It extended to cover advisers like Miers and their conversations with people outside the White House. It hid from Congress the August 6, 2001, President's Daily Brief, which revealed that Bush had been warned about Al Qaeda's determination to attack. And of course it sheltered Dick Cheney, who made the startling argument that the office of the Vice President entitles him to keep secret not only conversa-

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tions with Administration officials but also with private citizens.

The problem will not vanish in 2009. The executive branch has the greatest capacity to *create* secrets, thanks to its enormous intelligence apparatus. The growing risk of abuse, and the greater capacity for corrosive secrets, means we must find new ways to constrain the Article II leviathan. Moreover, arguments defending the privilege are much weaker than supposed. Foremost among these is what Bush calls the need for "crisp decision-making." Without secrecy, he implies, Presidents do not get candid advice.

There are three reasons this canard ought not to fend off a new law. First, executive privilege is never absolute: The Supreme Court in *United States v. Nixon* ordered the disclosure of intimate conversations between a President and his advisers. Second, claims for executive privilege are now untethered from any decision-making process that involves the President; they have been extended, viruslike, to the sprawling White House policy-making staff. Third, is it so bad for officials to feel the eyes of the people on their back? After all, they have a fidelity not only to the person who happens to sit in the Oval Office but also, via the Constitution, to the people. Why should officials ever forget their second—and arguably greater—obligation?

By contrast, the risk that Congress will abuse its investigative powers is smaller than generally imagined. Congressional overreaching is mitigated because the President's party is always on hand in Congress to publicize and condemn partisan investigations. Congressional misuse of power, unlike its executive counterpart, is always open to public criticism and condemnation.

An effective law on executive privilege would define and limit it. A law would clarify not only which communications are covered but when Congress can overcome the privilege: Allegations of criminal wrongdoing or violations of law would suffice to dissolve any absolute claim of nondisclosure. The law could then create mechanisms for threshold disclosure to a limited pool of legislators and staff. For disputes that persist, it would expedite judicial appeal. Courts would be obligated to resolve cases of constitutional moment quickly, to stop the clock from being run out. And clear sanctions would be imposed on the privilege's abuse.

The struggle over testimony today is but a fraction of a larger fight. The White House's effort to cloak its dismal legacy should not obscure the importance of the larger battle over the fundamental balance of constitutional power. AZIZ HUQ

Aziz Huq, co-author of Unchecked and Unbalanced: Presidential Power in a Time of Terror, *is at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU.*

A Bronx Tale

On a warm afternoon in late May, a group of teenagers launch a flotilla of five wooden rowboats onto the Bronx River, then take the oars and begin pulling swiftly upstream—past a scrap-metal yard, a furniture warehouse and a defunct cement plant. On the bank, yellow irises grow amid poison ivy; three cormorants sun themselves on a half-submerged log. A subway train rattles past on an elevated track, then the only sounds are the trill of a red-winged blackbird and the rhythmic splash of the oars.

When they reach a cluster of buoys, the crew begins hauling up mesh traps, checking the day's catch against an illustrated chart. The students are participants in an environmental education program run by the youth development group Rocking the Boat; today they are conducting a creel survey, an informal fish census. A small ripple of excitement spreads among the boats when someone identifies a tiny silvery tomcod. Its presence upriver, explains Joseph Rachlin, an aquatic ecologist at Lehman College who advises the program, shows that the Bronx River estuary is becoming "an important nursery ground" for marine fish.

Across the country, from Providence to Los Angeles, urban rivers that were polluted and even paved over are being restored. But the revival of the Bronx River is unusual. Traditionally advocates for the environment and for low-income communities have had little to say to each other; but because the Bronx River traverses some of the country's poorest neighborhoods, a few of its advocates are navigating new territory by connecting environmental issues like water quality and habitat restoration to economic issues like job creation and training. As Majora Carter, founder and executive director of Sustainable South Bronx, has said, "Economic degradation begets environmental degradation"; if the problems are linked, the solutions must be linked too.

The Bronx River begins as a stream in Westchester County and then flows down through the Bronx before spilling into the East River at Hunts Point. Once a habitat for muskrats, snowy egrets and beaver, by the late nineteenth century it was a dumping ground for the towns and industries alongside it—an "open sewer," in the words of an 1896 state commission. By the 1970s the river had become an urban wasteland lined with polluting industries, hemmed in by expressways, its banks strewn with refuse.

Congressman José Serrano, who represents the Bronx and has steered more than $15 million to Bronx River restoration projects, remembers volunteering with a river cleanup fifteen years ago: "The things that were being pulled out of there…parts of jeeps and trucks and tires, things you can't tell a lady. It was bad."

Since then, local ecology groups have continued to clear debris and advocated for cleaner water and riverside parks. Wildlife decimated by overharvesting and habitat destruction are now flourishing in and along the river. Oysters, once abundant in New York's waters, are spatting on manmade clamshell reefs. Hundreds of herring were released in the past two springs; when their fry return to spawn, volunteers will scoop them over the dams that have blocked their migration since the 1600s. And last winter, a beaver built his dam on the bank—the first of his species to make a home in New York City in 200 years.

Establishing a herring run may not seem like a high priority for the people of the Bronx, which contains the poorest Congressional district in the nation. But restoring the river has been a hard-fought goal for community groups, and especially for Hunts Point. Some 12,000 trucks trawl the neighborhood every day, carrying goods to its wholesale produce and fish markets; the area is also home to thirty scrap-metal yards and garbage-transfer stations, four power plants, a sewage-treatment plant and a factory that makes fertilizer from baked sewage sludge.

(Continued on Page 24)

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Supreme Court Justice Questions Marijuana Policy

Justice John Paul Stevens

Dissenting from the recent Supreme Court ruling on the suspension of an Alaskan student for waving a banner – "BONG HITS 4 JESUS" – at a high school event, Justice Stevens takes the long view:

> "….the current dominant opinion supporting the war on drugs in general, and our anti-marijuana laws in particular, is reminiscent of the opinion that supported the nationwide ban on alcohol consumption when I was a student. While alcoholic beverages are now regarded as ordinary articles of commerce, their use was then condemned with the same moral fervor that now supports the war on drugs…
>
> "…just as Prohibition in the 1920's and early 1930's was secretly questioned by thousands of otherwise law-abiding patrons of bootleggers and speak-easies, today the actions of literally millions of otherwise law-abiding users of marijuana, and of the majority of voters in each of the several States that tolerate medicinal uses of the product, lead me to wonder whether the fear of disapproval by those in the majority is silencing opponents of the war on drugs."

"Stevens compared the current marijuana ban to the abandoned alcohol ban and urged a respectful hearing for those who suggest 'however inarticulately' that the ban is 'futile' and that marijuana should be legalized, taxed and regulated instead of prohibited."
– Washington Post, July 26, 2007

70% of the drug war is about marijuana.

Common Sense for Drug Policy
www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org
www.ManagingChronicPain.org www.MedicalMJ.org
www.TreatingDrugAddiction.org
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ERIC ALTERMAN

All Rupert, All the Time

That American journalism is facing so many crises simultaneously has the effect of immobilizing a concerted response to any of them. From the Administration's war on the press, to the relentless attention lavished on Paris and Britney, to the domination of "serious" punditocracy discourse by friends and acolytes of the discredited Bill Kristol, to the way the upstart blogosphere has all but destroyed the prestige and authority of so many of the "wise men" with aggressive fact-checking and relentless questioning, to the fact that young people are more likely to be killed by terrorists than to buy a daily newspaper subscription or turn on the evening news—there are more problems than any one person can hope to address. Meanwhile, corporate owners are demanding 20 percent profit margins every year, thereby forcing cuts in coverage and diminishing the product, giving people even less reason to read or tune in. All one can really do is press on and hope for a miracle.

Rupert Murdoch might profitably be viewed as the Frankenstein monster of this multifaceted identity crisis. Take a look at his flagship American publication: the *New York Post*. It's dumb, celebrity-obsessed, spineless, corrupt, unreliable and reactionary, and even with all its pandering, it still manages to lose, by its own estimation, $30 million to $50 million a year.

It's not just the *Post* that Murdoch operates as a de facto nonprofit. The *Times* of London lost $89 million in 2004, and according to a News Corp. executive quoted in a recent *Wall Street Journal* article, even the *Australian* "doesn't consistently make money." Murdoch doesn't care. Newspapers make up just 14 percent of News Corp.'s operating income. What they cost in cash, they more than make up for in political and propaganda value. Examine any Murdoch newspaper—or book publishing or network news operation for that matter—and you will find any number of clear, inarguable abrogations of journalistic principles in the service of the immediate interests of Murdoch's corporate empire. Sometimes they curry favor with, or put pressure on, local politicians. Sometimes they manufacture "grassroots" support for some company-owned enterprise or Murdoch-friendly politician. Whatever actual news the media properties report is almost beside the point. When news values and business interests clash, business wins. When Murdoch's right-wing ideology and his business clash, business wins. Business always wins. Hence, Murdoch's editors and producers will sometimes find themselves forced to slant the news on behalf of center-left politicians like Tony Blair or Hillary Clinton. It's not that Murdoch is open-minded; it's that he's single-minded.

The genius of Murdoch's propaganda network is that by aping real news organizations, he helps himself to all kinds of tax breaks and constitutional privileges unavailable to nonmedia moguls, to say nothing of effects on elections and popular opinion. That he devalues the privileges and responsibilities of the press in America matters little to Murdoch, who appears to care nothing for traditional notions of respectability and treats journalists as no more important than the people who use his newspapers to wrap fish and chips. But it is rather shocking that so many people who care about the future of journalism remain silent or sanguine about his impact on one of democracy's most important professions. The news pages in the *Wall Street Journal* are about the smartest and bravest of any newspaper in America. Some people, like Dow Jones CEO Richard Zannino, enjoy stock holdings that offer roughly 20 million good reasons to believe that such journalism can continue unimpeded within the Murdoch empire. But the rest of us might as well believe in Peter Pan.

For nonconservatives the Dow Jones dance of death with Rupert Murdoch presents an additional complication. For all the—deserved—praise being heaped on the paper's news pages of late, its editorial pages already operate with Murdoch-like sleaze. News staffers frequently wake up to find their reporting attacked and undermined by the editorial page ideologues. When speaking anonymously, *Journal* reporters have been known to say things like "To have [editorial page editor] Paul Gigot as our captain is bullshit. It's not for real," and "They're wrong all the time. They lack credibility to the point that the emperor has no clothes." And yet without the power and prestige of the newspaper in which these edit page opinions come wrapped, they would be taken no more seriously than, say, the latest ravings of Rush Limbaugh or David Horowitz.

Alas, this very quality makes the edit page a perfect fit for the Murdoch modus operandi, so it comes as no surprise that Murdoch says he loves it—or that Fox News scooped up its taxpayer-funded talking-heads program, which failed so miserably to find an audience when Bush Administration operatives foisted it on PBS. The silver lining of this takeover is that when Murdoch destroys the credibility of the *Journal*—as he must if it is to fit in with his business plan—he will be removing the primary pillar of the editorial page's influence as well. In this regard his ownership is a kind of poisoned chalice.

The editors of *The New Republic* argue that the Murdoch takeover of Dow Jones comes at a "pivotal moment for liberals—a time to dial back their relentless hostility to newspapers and start crusading for them." It's a lot to ask of liberals to "crusade" on behalf of an enterprise whose editorial pages routinely call them cowards, traitors and criminals. Liberals would like nothing better than to take up the cause of the media's crucial role in rooting out corruption and speaking truth to power. To do so, however, we need media that take those responsibilities seriously. And given the MSM's performance on Whitewater, the Clinton impeachment crisis, the 2000 election, Florida and almost every major Bush Administration undertaking, that's an awfully tough case to make. If a Murdoch-owned and -operated *Wall Street Journal* clarifies matters, so much the better. Sometimes when God closes a door, He opens a window. ■

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ARTICLES

PURPLE AMERICA

The Democrats' 50-State Strategy Stokes North Carolina's Grassroots

BOB MOSER

This is the first in a series of reports by Nation *contributing writer Bob Moser, running through the 2008 elections, that will explore the evolving grassroots realities of so-called red-state politics in this time of political transition.* —*The Editors*

North Wilkesboro, North Carolina

What on God's green earth has gotten into the Wilkes County Democrats? Here it is, the first pretty April Saturday of a snowy, blowy spring. There's yards to mow, balls to toss, plants to plant, Blue Ridge Mountains to hike—all of which you'd think would be mighty tempting on Democratic convention day in a place where Republicans have a damn near two-to-one edge. "Welcome to red-hot Republican territory," says Dick Sloop, a career-military retiree turned antiwar protester who's the new county Democratic chair. "We've been like the homeless around here: silent and invisible. The best we ever did in my lifetime, we had two Democrats once on a five-seat county commission." Even here in western North Carolina, where Republicans have proliferated since the Civil War (when the woods were full of Union sympathizers rather than pro-lifers), Wilkes County—Bible-thumping, economically slumping—has stood out for its fire-and-brimstone conservatism. It's been a stiff challenge to find folks willing to run against the Republicans. Hell, it's been rare to hear anybody publicly admit to being a Democrat. "You've got a lot of people in this county who probably couldn't tell you if they've ever met one," Sloop says.

But in a scene playing out this year all across "red America," from these lush hills to the craggy outcroppings of the Mountain West, previously unfathomable crowds of Democrats are streaming up the steps of the old county courthouse, past bobbing blue balloons and WELCOME DEMOCRATS! signs. They're hopping mad about the national state of things but simultaneously giddy with a new-found hope—*finally*!—for their party.

Inside, as the courtroom fills up, three symbols of the new spirit bustle around. There's trim old Clyde Ingle, a onetime Hubert Humphrey campaigner who "finally just got tired of sitting up there in Deep Gap and complaining." Ingle and his wife, Eva, have spent the past couple of years cajoling shy Wilkes County Democrats to "come out of the closet," get organized and active. Then there's Mark Hufford, a young, towheaded bundle of energy who's been helping Democrats win breakthrough elections as a field organizer. And there's white-haired, wisecracking "Uncle Bob" Johnston, who retired to Wilkes from upstate New York and promptly found himself being talked into the party chairmanship. "You've got to be in trouble when you're asking an 80-year-old Yankee to run things," he quips.

Suddenly, though, things actually *are* running, as Johnston notes after the meeting commences. "The county has twenty-two precincts," he informs the folks. "And I'm proud to announce that every one of them is organized as of just the other day." It might sound dull as dirt, but this is the kind of meticulous organizing—and pride taken in it—that has long been key to GOP dominance in places like Wilkes. The fifty-state strategy kicked off in 2005 by that other Yankee, DNC chair Howard Dean, has begun to level the playing field by putting field organizers, media directors and fundraisers into both "red" and "blue" states to stimulate grassroots organizing and year-round party-building.

Of course, it's not the national strategy alone that's bringing record numbers out to county conventions, precinct parties and Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners. The main event this morning is going to be a heaping helping of the other ingredients in the Democratic resurrection across so-called red America—fury and frustration.

"Good morning everyone!" comes the booming drawl of Seth Chapman, the longtime clerk of court in neighboring Alexander County who's pondering a 2008 challenge to the arch-conservative Republican Congresswoman from these parts, Virginia Foxx. "Isn't this something—in Wilkes County of all places! I'll tell you what, I've been over here before when there was maybe six of us. This is great. How on fire the Democratic Party must be in Wilkes County—and rightfully so. You have suffered for centuries!"

Amen! shout several voices as Chapman, a plain-looking, middle-aged fellow in a dark suit ideal for funerals, serves up a couple of laugh lines, surveys the crowd with a gimlet eye and then, rather than work himself up to it, begins to flat-out holler into the superfluous microphone. "This hard work that we've got going on here, and the only thing the opposition is working for is their own sorry hides! Staying in there with the rats, looking out for nobody but their own selves and their own political agenda. And I for one am about fed up with it!"

Mmmm! a woman's voice rises from the second row. *Tell it!*

"Heard all the rhetoric. Heard everything they said they was going to do. What have they done? Bankrupted this country. Got us into a war needlessly! And doing nothing but telling us

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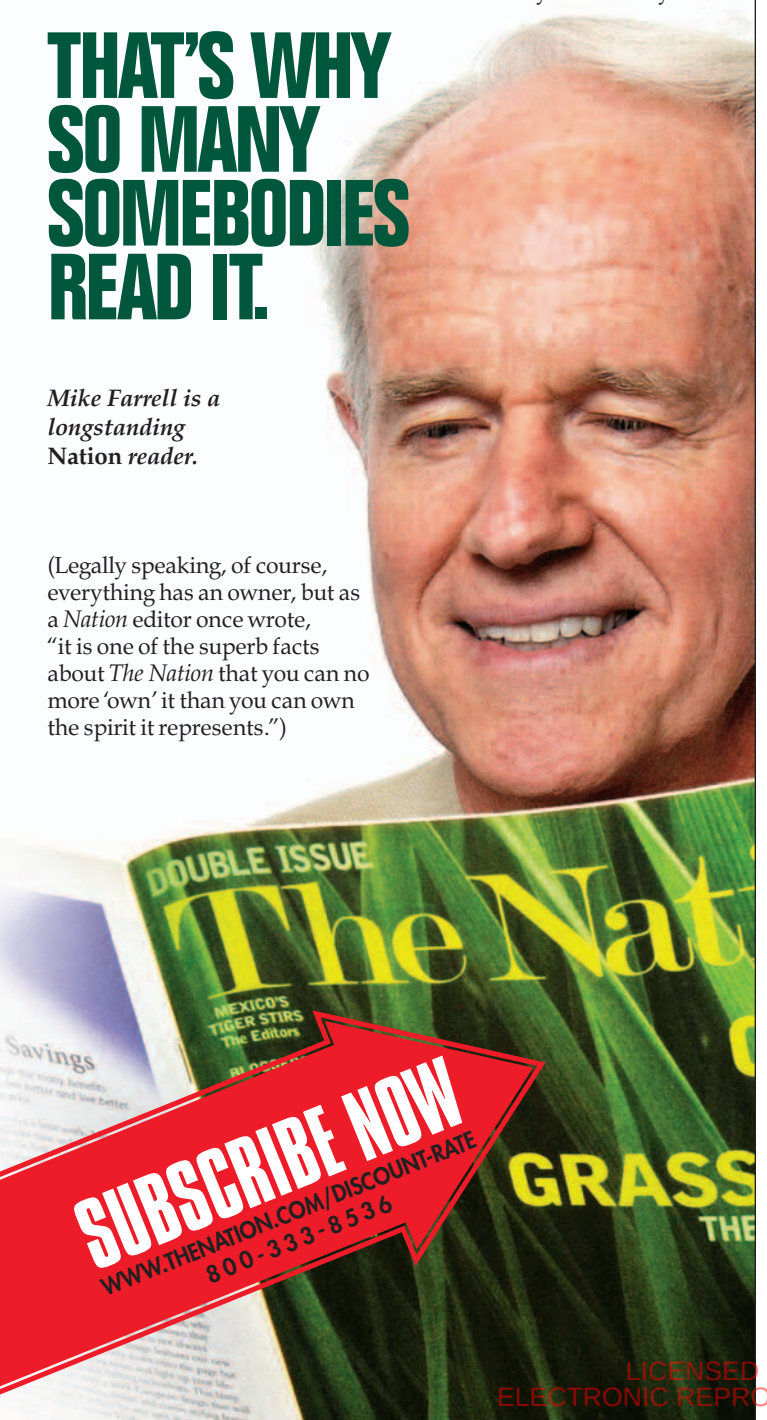
Mike Farrell is a longstanding* Nation *reader.

(Legally speaking, of course, everything has an owner, but as a *Nation* editor once wrote, "it is one of the superb facts about *The Nation* that you can no more 'own' it than you can own the spirit it represents.")



everything's all right. I'm going to go into a little more detail about that."

As he does, it becomes clear that Chapman, like speakers in many a county courthouse these days, is aiming not only to light a fire under the long-discouraged Democrats but also to pick apart the Republican messages that have proven so irresistible to folks, Democrats included, in places like Wilkes. "Of course, we know why Republicans oppose taxes: They want all the tax breaks. Let the rich man go, let the poor man pay: That's their philosophy, as it has been and always will be!"

Yes!

Chapman pauses to shuffle his notes dramatically, Baptist preacher–style, then brandishes a copy of resolutions passed at the GOP's recent district convention. "Do you believe their resolution says, Listen to the people of their district, not special-interest groups? Republicans talking about cleaning up governmental corruption is just like saying that Lucifer will suddenly become the angel of light again!"

You know that's right!

It seems impossible, but Chapman is getting louder now, jowls swinging, sweat beading, as folks alternately "mmm!" and "amen" and whoop out loud. "You ought to be *tiiiiired* of what's going on in government! It's a shame, and it's a sham. This is the party of what's right, they tell you. The party of God, they tell you. The party of moral values, they tell you. And if they can't play the God card, they'll play the military card. Now, I pray daily—and I beg you to—for our troops and what they're trying to accomplish over there with this needless, reckless war that's going on. I pray daily that God will hasten the day—"

Oh!

"—that they can return home and know war no more!" That gets a standing O.

"We're fighting a war" right here at home, Chapman declares. "Let's see… what should we call it? A war against radical Republicanism!" And from there, as he swells toward one final crescendo, the Wilkes Democrats having gotten pretty red-faced and sweaty themselves.

"The day of Republican smoke-screening and hiding under the outward righteousness of pharisaical Rome is *ov-ahhhhh*! America has seen, America has witnessed, your party's lip service to values, and we're tired of it. We will tolerate it no more! The Republican Party has no more claim on values and principles and especially God than those crazy jihadists over there! Your party's reign of terror values is *ov-ahhhhh*!"

Whew! Back in the long-gone days when Chapman's style of Democratic preachment was a popular form of entertainment in the South, the folks would have started filtering away after "the speaking." But nowadays the real work starts after the officers are elected, after the barbecue lunch is wolfed down. Ingle has organized a "practice canvass," in which novices will peel out across local neighborhoods, each accompanied by an experienced canvasser, to knock on the doors of fellow party members, urge them to get off their couches and put their own frustrations to work. "Practice, practice, practice," Ingle tells the folks. "That's what 2007 is all about. In ten months, we are gonna be something. We're going to take back the halls of Congress and City Hall." Farfetched as it sounds, it wouldn't be any more so than the red-to-blue turnaround that's happened

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just up the road in three formerly Republican counties. Not, that is, unless the Washington Democrats revert to their old form and find a way to douse the flames.

The single oddest thing about the fifty-state strategy is surely the adjective often attached to it: "controversial."

Just how, exactly, could there be controversy over a national political party organizing nationally—especially after years of pissing billions into an ever-shrinking "target" slice of the country, ceding wider and wider chunks of territory and disdaining the grassroots while Republicans built a powerful army of ground troops? The DNC's fifty-state project is relatively inexpensive, compared with the costs of the thirty-second TV ad blitzes the party has increasingly relied on to target voters in Ohio and Florida. Salaries for the state parties run to about $8 million annually, considerably less than 10 percent of the DNC's budget and downright humble compared with what the GOP and its affiliates spend for similar party work.

'The day of Republican smoke-screening and hiding under the outward righteousness of pharisaical Rome is ov-ahhhhh*!'*

In just two years, the belated catch-up effort has paid off in at least two tangible ways: It has exponentially multiplied grassroots party involvement and—in a short-term benefit not even envisioned by its architects—has helped win an impressive number of state, local and Congressional elections in majority-Republican regions. That's not to mention the intangible benefits of fanning out 180 Democratic organizers, fundraisers and communications specialists across the map, many of them working in places like western North Carolina, where, as one local activist puts it, "a lot of Democrats think of the national party as the devil itself." As the chair of the most overwhelmingly Republican of states, Utah's Wayne Holland, wrote last year, "Democrats have become outsiders who do things to us, not insiders who do things for us. The fifty-state strategy is one way to turn it around."

It is, in short, one of the brightest ideas the DNC has had in its undistinguished history. And the timing could not have been better: The organizing is providing a channel for the disgust inspired by the mounting catastrophes of the Bush years. In deep-red states like Utah, it's ticked up the number of Democrats voting and candidates running (30 percent more in 2006). In "purple" states like North Carolina, where Democrats dominate most local and statewide elections, it's helping to turn red counties purple and purple counties blue, uncorking a new strain of progressive populism—the kind that won Senate races in Virginia for Jim Webb, Montana for Jon Tester and Ohio for Sherrod Brown.

And it might not outlive the next presidential election.

Why? For starters, look no further than the other modifier often attached to the effort: "Howard Dean's fifty-state strategy." From the moment the former Vermont governor launched his campaign for DNC chair in the wake of the Democrats' 2004 debacle, the party establishment—that shadowy claque of high-paid consultants, big-money donors, lobbyists, pundits, Clintonites and Congressional leaders—has been at pains to paint Dean's vision as another manifestation of the out-of-control tendencies they fretted about, and whispered so gainfully to the media about, when he ran for President.

Dean's campaign for party chair was an outsider's run at the ultimate insider's job, spurred by a meeting he had at the 2004 national convention with disgruntled party leaders from eighteen long-neglected "red" states. In his own 2004 run, Dean had "found himself in the odd position of a candidate in charge of a movement that grew up almost accidentally around him," says Elaine Kamarck, a Harvard public-policy lecturer and highly unlikely "Deaniac" best known for encouraging the party's break with New Deal liberalism as a Democratic Leadership Council strategist. "That gave him the insights that led to the fifty-state strategy."

Dean had also studied the national rise of Republicanism, when the GOP built from the ground up in Southern and Western states that had long been tough terrain for them. "The Republicans sat down thirty years ago and figured out how to do this," Dean says. "Through disciplined organization they were able to take over the country." He spotted another kink in the Democratic works, says strategist Donna Brazile, Al Gore's 2000 campaign manager. "Republicans start the campaign the day after an election, win or lose. They don't wait to have a nominee before they start putting together a battle plan," she says. "Same on down the line, state and local. Democrats have started the day the nominee is selected, which is just bass-ackwards. We haven't had a party; we've had candidates and campaigns." That's one reason, Dean believes, Democrats haven't projected a strong national image, while GOP themes of low taxes and high morals have resonated loud and clear. "It's been a problem that presidential campaigns are where our themes are developed," he says. "Presidential campaigns are risk-averse by their nature, and it's not the best place to be developing your message and thinking big picture about where your party stands."

Dean's analysis ran contrary to the entrenched interests of those who had long run the DNC, Matt Bai wrote last year in *The New York Times Magazine*, as "essentially a service organization for a few hundred wealthy donors, who treated it like their private political club." Also being served at this "club" were Congressional leaders who had risen with help from the old DNC. And then there were the big-ticket consultants, the James Carvilles and Paul Begalas, who had shot to fortune and fame with their image-driven, big-media Bill Clinton campaigns, their pricey polling data and "strategic targeting."

"If you make your living buying and making TV ads, then you're not really very wild about a change in technology that says, Let's hire organizers," says Kamarck. "The whole political-consultant industry has been built on ads. But with cable TV and the diffusion of media, what the hell good is an ad? The fifty-state strategy takes a generation of consultants and kind of says, Let's put you out to pasture."

Despite insiders' desperate efforts to stop him, Dean cruised to victory, with overwhelming support from the "red" South and interior West. The club was integrated. And sure enough,

Bob Moser is a Nation *contributing writer.*

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the strangest things started happening.

Dean set out to make good on his promises, dispatching assessment teams to meet with leaders of every state party. First was North Carolina, where 34-year-old progressive Jerry Meek, the newly elected chair, was pleasantly flabbergasted by the DNC team's attitude. "They came down here and said, basically, What do you need? What is it that we can do to help build the state party in North Carolina?"

These were jaw-dropping questions. As Dean says, "Washington's idea of accountability is that you ask people in the states to jump and they'll ask, How high?" Meek recovered quickly enough to ask the DNC to pay the salaries of three regional organizers he was already planning to bring on board. The DNC complied. And they weren't sent down from Washington; state parties make their own hires, on Dean's wild theory that "the closer you can get to neighbors talking to neighbors, the better you can reach people with the Democratic message in a way they'll understand."

'The closer you can get to neighbors talking to neighbors,' says Dean, 'the better you can reach people with the Democratic message.'

North Carolina's first hire, Mark Hufford, knew the turf. He also knew that Democrats in a few of these mountain counties had already begun to dig themselves out of the doldrums—particularly in Watauga County, where a band of progressives had taken over the party apparatus in the 1990s and, despite a sizable Republican majority among registered voters, slowly built toward dominance in local elections. The Watauga organizers were soon being deployed to help Hufford train and inspire other county leaders on recruiting good candidates, motivating volunteers and getting out votes. Last fall, as Watauga County chair Diane Tilson happily recalls, "We were the first county in the nation to do a county-wide canvass. Yes we were! It was freezing cold, but we did it."

Often, even when hard-core Republicans answer their doors, they turn out to have issues on their mind that run right up the Democratic alley. "There's so many people that really don't realize the relationship between elections and whether or not they're going to be able to get their drugs," Tilson says, "or how expensive gas is." While new canvassers often brace themselves for a barrage of questions about abortion and gay marriage, that's not foremost on most folks' minds. "They're thinking about whether they'll have heat this winter," she says. "How they're going to get themselves to the grocery store and work."

In November, Democrats swept every race in Watauga. They won big down the road in Ashe County, another Republican stronghold with a newly energized grassroots. Eight-term GOP Congressman Charles Taylor was dethroned by Heath Shuler, a social conservative, but one with a feisty prolabor and environmental bent. And the Democrats came within one win of a clean sweep in "red" Polk County. In a blog on the statewide progressive website, BlueNC, Polk chair Margaret Johnson chalks it up not only to better organizing but to "walking the talk about what it means to be a Democrat." Where grassroots Republicans often rally around religious issues, the Polk and Watauga Democrats have turned themselves into quasi-civic groups year-round, organizing roadside cleanups, planting gardens, helping the needy, putting on fundraising walks to benefit the environment. "Even Republicans come up to me," says Johnson, "and say, I may not agree with your politics, but I sure like what you're doing."

While the fifty-state strategy was fueling the brush fire across western North Carolina and other unlikely parts of red-state America in 2006, the Washington club was fit to be tied. With George W. Bush plunging toward record-low approval ratings, the polls were showing that Democrats had a real shot at winning back Congress—and what was their party chair doing? Stubbornly refusing to scale back his fifty-state priorities and open the DNC's ATM to the Democratic campaign committees! So what if the Senate and Congressional campaign outfits were raking in unprecedented money, some of it from the big donors who used to open their wallets for the DNC? There were ads to buy, targets to target, consultants to consult!

Clearly, this state of affairs cried out for some well-placed media smears and strong-arm tactics. In March 2006 House Speaker-to-be Nancy Pelosi and Senate majority leader-to-be Harry Reid met with the miscreant from Vermont and, according to the *Washington Post*, "complained about Dean's priorities." To little avail. In May DCCC chair Rahm Emanuel and DSCC honcho Chuck Schumer had a similar contretemps with Dean, ending with Emanuel reportedly storming out with "a trail of expletives." And on CNN, Clinton consultant and long-time Democratic strategist Paul Begala tartly mouthed the insiders' consensus. "He says it's a long-term strategy. But what he has spent it on, apparently, is just hiring a bunch of staff people to wander around Utah and Mississippi and pick their nose."

While Dean and Schumer came to a truce, others continued to fume—even after the Democrats won back Congress, not to mention several red-state legislatures, in November. Before the victory celebrations had wound down, Carville renewed fire on the DNC, telling a group of reporters that Dean had cost the party an additional twenty House seats with "leadership…Rumsfeldian in its competence." But former DNC chair Don Fowler of South Carolina, whose son Donnie had run against Dean for party chair, was among a chorus of power hitters who eventually shouted down what he called Carville's "nonsense."

Not a harsh word has been heard, at least publicly, from Dean's detractors since the Carville brouhaha. That's thanks not only to the intervention of saner voices but also to a study of the fifty-state strategy's impact on the 2006 midterm results by Elaine Kamarck. While the project had not been designed to win elections in the short run, Kamarck found that it had done just that, "increasing the Democratic vote share beyond the bounce of a national tide favoring Democrats." Comparing Democratic results in '06 with those of the '02 midterms, she found that the average Democratic vote went up by nearly 5 percent in 2006. But in the thirty-five Congressional districts where fifty-state staffers had worked on the campaigns, Democratic votes had soared by an average of nearly 10 percent.

"Nothing like a little straight analysis to cut through the bullshit, huh?" Kamarck says. "This came out in January and quickly got distributed. I kept running into the big-money guys and they had all read it. It was funny to see how quickly this

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went through the political fundraising community. They're desperate for something that is hard data as opposed to the nonstop sales pitches they get. And you never heard a peep after that from Carville."

But these are Washington Democrats we're talking about; the story couldn't possibly end as tidily as this. It's far from certain what fate the fifty-state effort will meet when Dean's tenure ends in early 2009. He has insisted he doesn't want another four years—and even if he did, he'd likely be out of luck no matter how the presidential election pans out. If the Democrats lose, Dean will surely catch much of the blame. And if there's a Democrat in the White House, tradition dictates that the President nominates—and effectively selects—the chair. But Jay Parmley, a former Oklahoma state chair and roving DNC organizer in the South, is guardedly optimistic. "A lot of people are fretting, Oh, my gosh, when Howard leaves what's gonna happen?" he says. "I'm not worried about it going away after what we saw in 2006. Whoever wins the White House is going to have to say, Well, this fifty-state strategy helped get me there, and so we're not going to monkey with it too much.

"Doesn't mean they won't, of course."

The real fear is that a second Clinton presidency would mean a return to the Washington-centric ways of the first—to party control by "the very people who ground down the activist base in the 1990s and have continued to hold the party's grassroots in utter contempt," as Markos Moulitsas of Daily Kos wrote in the *Washington Post*. The harshest public critics of Dean's strategy are also among Hillary Clinton's most trusted advisers: Emanuel, Carville, Begala. As Thomas Edsall reported in *The New Republic* last year, many top Clintonites so loathe and mistrust Dean that their campaign is "laying the groundwork to circumvent the DNC." There is talk of Clinton's team keeping its own field staff with the campaign after winning the primaries, rather than shifting them under the auspices of the DNC for the general election, as has been standard practice. "The DNC is going to be peripheral" if Hillary wins the nomination, one Clinton aide said. Clinton acolyte Harold Ickes Jr. has raised millions for a private voter database, to avoid relying on the DNC's.

But Kamarck believes the Clinton campaign, if Hillary is nominated, would make peace with Dean's DNC for one reason: He's transformed it from the Democrats' perennial problem into one of their biggest assets. "What you typically see is that as soon as a Democratic nominee is chosen, they send some senior eminence down to the DNC," Kamarck says. "The first thing this senior eminence does is complain about what a mess the party is. Because it always was. This time, the presidential candidate is going to come in and be wowed by what they see." And that, in turn, may give Dean leverage to keep organizers in the field throughout 2008, rather than devoting the entire apparatus to the presidential campaign—also the old norm.

"He's earned a seat at the table," says Donna Brazile. "Can't nobody pull his tablecloth and take his knife and fork at this point."

Besides, says Brazile, Democrats have a historic opportunity to start building a lasting national majority by winning back more of the voters—in places like Wilkes County, for one—they started to lose four decades ago. "White swing voters in the South and West are now much more open to independent-minded and liberal Democrats," she says. "They're disgusted with the Republicans. This is the moment to bring them back. Why pull the rug out from them? Why leave that terrain to the Republicans all over again?" ■

THE ATLANTA GATHERING BROUGHT TOGETHER ACTIVISTS WHO OPERATE UNDER THE RADAR.

A Grassroots Social Forum

DARRYL LORENZO WELLINGTON

Imagine a racism workshop—not a touchy-feely "prejudice reduction" workshop but an all-out emotional and cathartic conversation on race. Now imagine a church service—not a solemn devotion but the kind of rocking, joyous communion that shakes the floorboards. Now imagine, lofted above the congregation, a sea of protest banners. The orations are secular; the pulpit is political.

RYAN INZANA

This pretty much captures the spirit that dominated the first US Social Forum, held in Atlanta June 27–July 1. Having appropriately fine-tuned the World Social Forum motto to fit the host country ("Another World Is Possible, Another US Is Necessary"), this gathering—with more than 900 workshops conducted in the Atlanta Civic Center, local hotels and theaters, and drawing some 12,000 registered attendees—made only partial concession to dry political strategy; it was a locus of progressive dreams and activist chutzpah.

"Our national dilemma today is not technological retardation but moral deficiency. We have a moral deficiency in establishing priorities when putting our technological advances to work for the common good," said iconic civil rights activist Joseph Lowery at the opening-day march. The crowd left from the State Capitol and wound down Peachtree Street, the main business thoroughfare of the city, as bankers, clerks and secretaries gathered on steps and watched in wonder. A crowd of a couple thousand was a rare display, even in a city accustomed to conferences and rallies. Lowery had positioned the

Darryl Lorenzo Wellington is a freelance writer living in Charleston, South Carolina.

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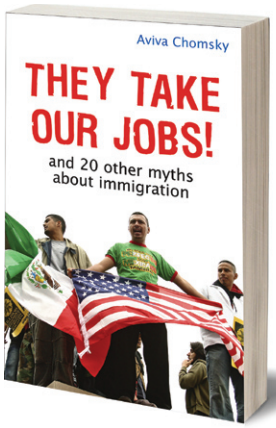

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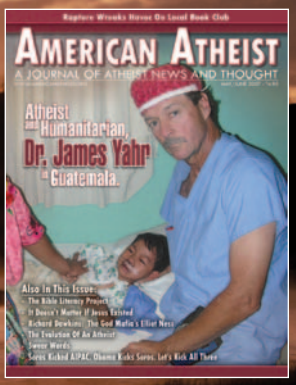

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spirit of the marchers vis-à-vis the American Republic to a T: The problem was the need for an America less stingy, less conceited and altogether less thuggish.

The Civic Center sits blocks away from Task Force for the Homeless, which was also the site of a forum-sponsored art exhibit. The visibility of the homeless was much commented upon; invisible, however, were Atlanta public officials. The only Democratic presidential candidate to send representatives was Dennis Kucinich—who supports and in fact co-wrote universal healthcare reform bill HR 676, which was touted by several activist groups. The opening parade was too big a spectacle to be ignored by the press, but thereafter, the forum disappeared from the media, apart from a few rather trivializing articles.

What did it mean to sponsor a social forum in the United States—in the city of Martin Luther King Jr., but also in the heart of conservative Dixie? In Georgia, a state with heinous immigration policies? What the national media missed was that this meeting was big news among America's grassroots organizers, who focused on issues such as immigration, gentrification, homelessness and prison reform.

It was commented on from the first day that the US forum was different from previous World Social Forums. There was a notable absence of political scientists, philosophers, policy heads and large NGOs. While all fifty states and several countries were represented, the largest US contingents came from the Southeast and Southwest. There was a large Latino contingent, and most sessions at the forum were translated from English into Spanish, or vice versa. Hundreds of participants arrived via the "Freedom Caravan," commemorating the civil rights Freedom Rides of 1961. Buses that began in Albuquerque linked with others in Texas, the ravaged Gulf Coast and historic points in the Deep South such as Selma, Alabama, symbolically connecting the Gulf Coast with other seminal places in activist history.

A considerable number of attendees had never been to a World Social Forum—and often expressed scant familiarity with those gatherings. Most said they were in Atlanta to support a local group that practiced "bottom up" organizing. The workshops on antiglobalization and other world issues were accompanied by US-specific workshops on resisting the privatization of schools, building a black-Latino coalition and finding alternatives to foundation support, as well as a slew conducted by or addressing the concerns of hip-hop enthusiasts.

Nation-specific social forums are not new. The process initiated in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001 has already led to national and regional social forums throughout Europe and Latin America. According to researchers Jennifer Hadden and Sidney Tarrow, "In Italy alone, one of us found hundreds of local and regional social forums." Yet social forums have received relatively little publicity in the United States, and for the first few years at least, relatively few US citizens participated in the world conclaves. This is ironic, considering that the anti-WTO protest of 1999, familiarly known as the Battle in Seattle, was the major impetus behind the initiation of the social forums—the five-day gatherings being a "positive" alternative to anti-WTO agitation.

The WSF International Counsel began talking with US activists about a US event as far back as 2003. Grassroots Global Justice, a California group that focuses on US trade policy,

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was integral to those early discussions. Executive director Michael Leon Guerrero remembers, "We saw that it was very important that grassroots efforts taking place in the United States receive more visibility in the international community.... Many of our colleagues in other parts of the world have little knowledge of conditions here, and they often do not know there are organizations working for social change here. But we thought it best at that time to delay a US forum. We found that the level of understanding wasn't high enough. We were getting too many questions like, How will this be different from any other conference?"

Eventually, a date was set for a US Social Forum: the summer of 2006. An organizing committee accepted bids from grassroots groups throughout the country; the finalists were Albuquerque, San Francisco and Atlanta. "I think we were swayed by Atlanta primarily for moral reasons," remembers Guerrero. Project South of Atlanta became the lead USSF administrator. "We fought for it," says Jerome Scott of Project South. "The South bears a legacy of slavery and oppression, but also a legacy of resistance that no one can deny. There's no place better than the South to show that we can be—that we deserve to be—a part of the Global South."

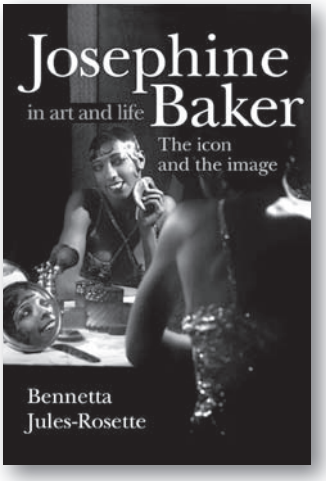
Then Katrina struck. The floodwaters that demolished the Gulf Coast in 2005 stole the energies of numerous grassroots organizations. In particular, Project South was overwhelmed by its own relief work with Katrina refugees displaced in Atlanta. Walda Katz Fishman of Project South anticipated the first US Social Forum as the place "to start connecting the dots of a US justice movement—something visible, something national. We have allies worldwide, but you can't go from being local to global. First, you've got to be national. We did some tough wrangling over the decision to delay it, but I think it was necessary."

"Katrina still hurts," said an audience member at the Gulf Coast plenary. If the workshops were the nuts and bolts of the forum, the plenaries were the Oprah Winfrey version, charged and emotional auditorium gatherings. However, the Katrina panel, which included speakers on the black-brown coalition, marked a register of emotional turmoil that exceeded that of any protest at the USSF against the Iraq War. Panelist after panelist accused the government of indifference, racism, exploiting the hurricane as a gentrification scheme; some went so far as to use the words "murder" and even "genocide."

No wonder the Gulf Coast plenary brought many audience members to tears. There were a number of Katrina warriors and veterans in the crowd; many belonged to groups that still have tentacles on the Gulf or that counsel Katrina refugees in their own communities. The decimation of the coast and its reconstruction affect the issues that grassroots activists take most personally, and see as their own: housing, healthcare, gentrification, community rights, wages and workers' rights.

Doubtless the disaster would be much worse without their efforts. There is nonetheless a sense of having failed to promote the cause of Katrina survivors. The country still has not confronted the implications of having several hundred thousand former Gulf Coast residents displaced and scattered across the country—largely because of government neglect of the levees—while in many cases their home communities are being gentrified. From a bird's-eye view, Gulf Coast "reconstruction" looks a lot like homegrown neoliberalism.

Postmodern Homegirl



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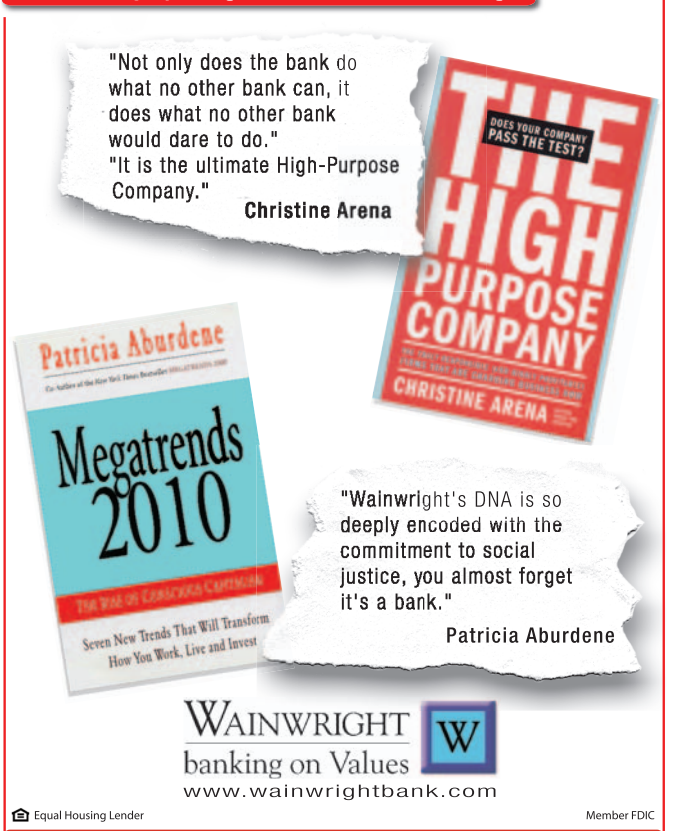
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The plenary discussion on a potential black-Latino coalition reached a climax when Daniel Castellanos of the Alliance for Guest Workers for Dignity described his journey from impoverishment in Peru to substandard employment in New Orleans. "I saw so many African-Americans, and I asked, Why aren't they getting this work?" he said. Then a dramatic pause. Instead of a lecture on how Bush's post-Katrina suspension of worker protections resulted in an influx of cheap immigrant labor, he delivered the big picture: "It's very clear. They want us to fight—they want the African-American and Latino communities to fight!" The crowd erupted in chants of approval.

The USSF may have been at its strongest in workshops combining information, practical experience and a human touch. Colin Rajah of the National Network of Immigrant Rights conducted a workshop titled "Trade and Migration: Exploring the Intersection of Trade and Immigration Policies." Rajah's lecture on free-trade economics was accompanied by live testimonials from "NAFTA survivors." Says Rajah, "Even though we have different groups looking at trade and immigration issues, they are interlinked in a US foreign policy that seeks to accomplish two things: to open up markets and control those markets and, second, to manage and control the immigrant labor flow. I work for an immigrant rights organization, but to do my work effectively I need to be very savvy about trade policy. Trade and immigration work together to create a funnel effect, regulating the immigrant flow in ways that benefit multinational corporations. It's not coincidental that Operation Gatekeeper [the 1994 security initiative that fenced the US-Mexico border near San Diego] and NAFTA were implemented months apart." Testimonials that made the human impact of free-trade policies on immigrants real were provided by (among others) a former employee of a sweatshop operated by Levi Strauss before the company outsourced to China and a representative of a coalition of immigrant tomato pickers in Immokalee, Florida, who led a successful protest for wages and health benefits against Taco Bell. "The real solution is to look at trade and immigration patterns together," says Rajah.

The Katrina panel marked a register of emotional turmoil that exceeded that of any protest at the USSF against the Iraq War.

If by some miracle the USSF did receive widespread media attention—if, say, every plenary were broadcast on national TV—would it galvanize a hidden majority of closet or disenfranchised radicals? Or would the rhetorical excesses of aspects of the forum provoke dismay, or laughter? Social forums could be called "orgies of idealism," and thus would be easy to mock. But the few forum-related articles in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* were characterized less by condescension than simple befuddlement. "Marchers Take Beefs to the Streets," ran the headline of a June 28 article that detailed few of their "beefs" in particular. A confusing article published during the forum began, "Karl Marx…held court Thursday night…at the US Social Forum" (the sixth paragraph finally explained that Marx was an actor in a performance), and summed up the week's events as "a Woodstock for the globally conscious set, sans drugs."

In addition to potential scoffing from without, there were treacherous fault lines within. Candido Grzybowski, one of the original founders of the World Social Forum, who now sits on the WSF International Council, said efforts to encourage groups to combine workshops often merely resulted in "two workshops in the same room," an apt metaphor for the doggedness and insularity of activists who, accustomed to oppositional stances, are often loath to compromise. The agendas that make up social forums do compete—for attention. The forum itself is left of center, but where is the center of the forum? At the final plenary Native American activists were insulted when time limitations resulted in a speaker being cut short. In the context of the forum—a space for dialogue on race, justice and stories of oppression—the move struck the first Americans as hugely symbolic. They reacted by flooding the stage and performing a healing ritual. The conflict was resolved; in fact, it was resolved with admirable grace. But the incident underscores the problems of building a movement between spheres of regional activism and among oppressed communities.

That said, there was a freshness to the USSF. It was a coming together of activists who operate under the radar in the United States, who brought something new to the table: an army of small organizations devoted to their communities, whose efforts rarely make the evening news, acting locally but (potentially) connecting globally. The atmosphere was distinctly "hands on" and tutorial—political science and strategy took a back seat to insider knowledge. For instance, the Ruckus Society conducted workshops on violent and nonviolent protest, including one on "Blockades: How to Effectively Hold Your Ground," just as other groups conducted workshops on maneuvering through the criminal justice system, the practical minutiae of voter organizing, immigrant organizing and resisting college military recruitment programs. There was an identifiable thrust behind the workshops considered as a whole: Teach organizing techniques that participants can then take home and use in their own communities.

It helped—greatly—that the planning and implementation of the USSF was a model of multicultural cooperation. The majority of the administrative personnel as well as the plenary speakers were women and people of color. It was not an environment where activists and minorities were lectured to by "others"—scholars, whites, representatives of establishment NGOs. "Where was the color in Seattle?" was a common joke that parodied the 1999 Battle in Seattle, implying that antiglobalization activism and its offshoots were the domain of a privileged white middle class. The USSF reversed that impression, bringing white activists initially inspired by the WTO protests together with radicalized blacks, Latinos and indigenous Americans.

The USSF won the respect of the participants by mirroring their own grassroots efforts. It was funded with a $900,000 budget—peanuts in today's world—from sponsors, donors and registration fees, and it depended largely on the volunteer efforts of grassroots groups. For most of the implementation stage, the forum employed only three full-time staffers. If the seventh World Social Forum, held in Nairobi this past January, was by some accounts corrupted by commercial sponsors, the USSF was smaller, humbler and underfunded, but also untainted.

Although much ire at the gathering was directed against the

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The New York Mint

Numismatic Review

Discovered in a Smithsonian Institution Vault…

The First Coin Design To Show America's "Trust In God"

The recent U.S. Mint release of the new $1 Presidential Coins, some without the motto "In God We Trust," has numismatists digging into the history of the motto. The results revealed not only the first design attempting to use the motto, but led to the exclusive striking of this "lost" design for the VERY FIRST TIME!

Unseen for over 140 years!

In 1864, America's first attempt to add a religious motto to its coins was rejected. Filed away in the pages of U.S. Mint chief engraver James B. Longacre's sketchpads, the design remained unseen for over 140 years—until now! While studying Longacre's notes stored in the National Numismatics Collection at the Smithsonian Institution, researchers found that the famed designer's first attempt at the motto was actually for a $20 Gold Double Eagle with the words "Our Trust Is In God." The design was shelved as Congress debated over the inclusion of the motto on U.S. coins. Instead of appearing on a $20 Gold Double Eagle, the first coin to utilize the motto was Longacre's Two-Cent piece with the motto shortened to "In God We Trust."

Why the shortened motto?

Was the motto shortened to accommodate the smaller denomination? We'll never know, but now you can own a pure silver Proof of Longacre's first endeavor to convert U.S. coinage with this magnificent proposed-motto design—struck for the very first time from his actual sketches discovered in the numismatic vault at the Smithsonian Institution! Containing one ounce of .999 pure silver and struck to an ultra-cameo Gem Proof quality, this wonderful design commemorates a piece of American history and belongs in everyone's collection. Now you can secure the world's first and only "Our Trust Is In God" Double Eagle Proof for **only $99** (plus S&H). CALL TODAY!

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United States, American pragmatism was in evidence in Atlanta. World Social Forums have been called confusing; in Atlanta the forum provided a space in which groups were able to make the connections they needed without the burden of having to sign off on every agenda or defend every plenary statement. The spirit of community and the welding of alliances was encouraging. "A disappointment of the grassroots left was that while there was a big response to Katrina, it wasn't an organized response," says Guerrero of Grassroots Global Justice. "If Hurricane Katrina hit today, the response would be very different. From all the relationships that have developed here in terms of communication, infrastructure, the feeling of solidarity, we could put out a general call and create a unified response. This forum has created a different situation; there could be a much higher level of coordination."

A number of groups concerned with housing and urban issues decided to coordinate their efforts and drew up a collective "Right to the City." Thirteen domestic workers' rights organizations from various parts of the country (New York, Los Angeles, Washington, San Francisco) voted to form a domestic workers' alliance. "We have those regions in our domestic workers' alliance thus far. And we know of other cities where organizing is happening. We're hoping our example will inspire them," says Ai-jen Poo of Domestic Workers United.

This is movement—perhaps not "a movement" but movement-building. The best that interested parties can do now is find ways to facilitate and sustain those links until the next US Social Forum, in 2010. ■

THE 'NEAR POOR' ARE JUST ONE PAYCHECK, ONE LOST JOB, ONE DIVORCE AWAY FROM POVERTY.

The Missing Class

EYAL PRESS

RYAN INZANA

Sociologist Katherine Newman is best known for her richly documented, fine-grained portraits of the working poor. In books such as *No Shame in My Game* and *Chutes and Ladders*, she has chronicled the experiences of low-wage workers struggling against formidable odds to lift themselves out of poverty. Unlike many economists, Newman focuses less on statistics than on the barriers and opportunities people encounter in their daily lives, shedding light on the fault lines of the nation's class divide through intimate accounts of families and neighborhoods. In her forthcoming book, *The Missing Class*, written with Victor Tan Chen, Newman has turned her attention to the travails of the "near poor," a vast pool of workers who are neither officially destitute nor comfortably middle class. Recently, *Nation* contributing writer Eyal Press caught up with her at her home in Manhattan.

Who are the "near poor"?

The near poor are people with household incomes between $20,000 and $40,000 a year for a family of four, or 100 to 200 percent of the poverty line. And there are actually almost twice as many of them as there are people under the poverty line—57 million in the US. They represent, on the one hand, an improvement, forward motion, the promise of upward mobility. But their lives are not stable. They truly are one paycheck, one lost job, one divorce or one sick child away from falling below the poverty line.

Are the members of this class in a more precarious situation today than, say, ten or twenty years ago?

More precarious than in the late 1990s, yes, but not twenty years ago. The reason is that we had this golden period between about 1997 and 2002, when we had record low unemployment, high growth, low inflation, and that's part of what propelled these people forward—employers were looking for more of them, and opportunities opened up. That's less the case today.

What kinds of neighborhoods do the people you're describing live in?

Like the poor, the near poor tend to live in places that have serious problems of infestation—rodents, cockroaches—which means they have very high rates of asthma, childhood asthma in particular, and high rates of lead exposure, since their apartment buildings are older. They are also in neighborhoods with fewer consumer options, places not well served by the big chain stores that have the lowest prices. So basically the poor and the near poor are soaked—everything they buy is more expensive than it should be. It's like a huge tax on them, and there are also health consequences—your access to a decent diet is compromised; it's harder to get fresh fruits and vegetables. Problems like obesity are very pronounced in this population. But the neighborhoods of the near poor are less segregated and have a more diverse income mix than those of the "real" poor.

You call this a "missing class." Is it missing from the consciousness of Republicans or Democrats?

Pretty much both. John Edwards wrote the foreword to this book, so it's on his radar screen, but I haven't heard anybody else talk about these people, neither Republicans nor Democrats. I don't think the political parties reach out to them very much.

Yet I take it that what happens in Washington does have an impact on their lives.

Some of the policies set in motion over the past decade have had a particularly pronounced effect on the near poor. For

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example, welfare reform propelled a lot of people into the labor market. Meanwhile, No Child Left Behind created a system of high-stakes tests for kids in the public school system. Nobody was thinking about what these two policies would mean when they collided behind the closed doors of a family. But in a family, these things are colliding all the time: the demand placed on parents to be in the labor market and the demand placed on kids to pass those high-stakes tests, which they're far less likely to do if parents aren't around to take them to the library, read to them, look over their homework. There are stories in the book about mothers who had been able to go to their kids' schools, couldn't go anymore, didn't realize they were falling off the deep end, and then that kid ends up on Rikers Island.

Is there more, or less, awareness today of the challenges facing the working poor than when you began your research?

There's greater recognition now that we actually have a population called the working poor. I think that attempts to beat back some of the more successful policy innovations, like the earned-income tax credit, have failed in part because there's recognition that these people exist, that they should be supported and that we need to do something about their health insurance. What I don't see is much attention to fostering mobility out of working poverty. We seem to feel that as long as we've taken people off public assistance, our job is done. But it isn't done—it isn't good enough in a country as wealthy as this to replace welfare-dependent poverty with working poverty.

Yet welfare reform has not led to the disaster some people predicted. Haven't those who feared this, including yourself, been proven wrong?

What I didn't anticipate, and I don't think anyone anticipated, was that in the late '90s we would have really tight labor markets, a roaring economy, very high growth, very low inflation. We basically had the opposite of a perfect storm—we had perfect weather, and that provided a lot of mobility opportunity even for the people I study. But welfare reform won't receive its real test until we see a big recession and we can see what happens to people without any safety net beneath that. We haven't seen that, so it's not easy to know what it would mean.

In your previous book, *Chutes and Ladders*, you told the stories of two groups: the "high flyers," who succeeded in climbing out of poverty, and the "low riders," who didn't. What was the main difference between them?

For the most part the difference is explained not by their desire for upward mobility but by their family circumstances. Everybody wants a better job and everybody is willing to work for it. But women who had children and no one to help them with those kids were much more likely to get trapped—they couldn't get more education, which limited their job options; their contact with the labor market was more fragile and episodic. Whereas the people who could afford childcare or who worked out elaborate arrangements with extended family members were able to stay on the job, get more training and move upward.

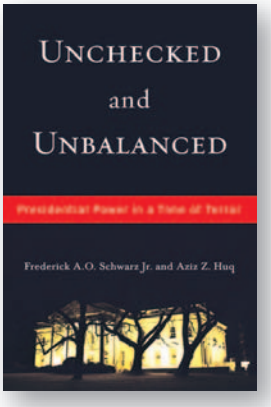
That sounds like an answer conservatives would love—it's all about family.

But when we say it's about family, we're really talking about the burdens people face in simultaneously trying to combine family responsibilities with the demands of the labor market. And we don't make it easy for them to do that. In Italy, you have access to full-time, high-quality childcare from the time your child is an infant. Similarly in France. A lot of families I studied who didn't make it out of poverty were the ones where the childcare options were so dangerous they couldn't leave their kids, so they ended up dropping out of the labor market, which isn't good for them or for their children. I don't think conservatives have much of an answer to this. The only answer I hear them giving is that poor people shouldn't have children at all.

If you could take the platform of the Democratic candidate for President and insert three provisions for the missing class into it, what would they be?

Universal, high-quality, early-childhood education would be very high on my list, because the more we can do for kids when they start out to level the playing field, the better off the whole country will be in the long run. Universal healthcare would be hugely important, not only because of its health consequences but because it frees up income for other things. And opening up and maintaining access to higher education, because the people on the losing end of this economy are the poorly educated. Instead, I fear we're going in the opposite direction—we're seeing increases in public higher-education tuition, which will make it very hard for new generations to succeed. ■

"Chilling and timely. . . . necessary reading for anyone interested in how those efforts by the Bush White House have tipped the constitutional system of checks and balances." —*New York Times*



"Schwarz and Huq are especially good at describing the exertions by the Bush Administration to cloak these actions with a tissue of legality."
—*The Nation*

"A valuable critical perspective . . . and structural critique of executive excess"
—*New York Review of Books*

Frederick A.O. Schwarz Jr. is senior counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law and a partner at Cravath, Swaine & Moore. He was chief counsel to the Church Committee. **Aziz Z. Huq** is associate counsel at the Brennan Center and previously clerked for the U.S. Supreme Court.

BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE AT NYU SCHOOL OF LAW
THE NEW PRESS

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COMMENT

CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 8)

"This neighborhood is targeted over and over again for just the most obscene projects," says Kellie Terry-Sepulveda, executive managing director of The Point, a community and youth development agency, "with no regard for the health conditions that we are already dealing with here."

Hunts Point also has the lowest parks-to-people ratio in the city. For decades there was no place residents could walk along the river—or even see it. "I used to ask the kids, 'How many of you live in a waterfront community?'" Terry-Sepulveda exclaims, "and no one would raise their hand. No one!" One Rocking the Boat student, twelfth grader Stephanie Cabral, says, "I didn't even know we had a Bronx River." (This fall she will begin studying environmental science at the State University of New York.)

In recent months, the river has become more accessible. After years of community planning and pressure, two new riverside parks have blossomed on the Hunts Point peninsula, where residents can row a boat, cast a fishing line or watch herons preening along the shore. Sustainable South Bronx has designed a greenway—a landscaped biking and walking trail that will wind along the Hunts Point waterfront and through the South Bronx. Someday, says Terry-Sepulveda, the greenway will create "a network of opportunities for the community to reclaim the waterfront. It's been monopolized by industry for far too long."

The water is still not as clean as Bronx ecologists would like. One of the river's main pollutants, now as in 1896, is sewage. The waste problem lies deep in New York City's antiquated infrastructure, where storm-water and sewage pipes are joined. In a heavy rainfall, the system is quickly overwhelmed: Each year 27 billion gallons of human excreta pour into the city's rivers and bays; 558 million gallons are dumped into the Bronx River alone. According to Majora Carter, there's a low-tech solution to the overflows—a solution that would promote both ecology and economic development. More than 60 percent of the Bronx River watershed is paved; replacing all that concrete with greenery would keep rainwater from the sewers. Her organization trains Bronx residents, many of whom have never held a job before, for "green-collar" jobs (installing green roofs, landscaping) that could help reduce "toxic days on the Bronx River."

Penny Matta, a graduate of the training program, is now a supervisor on the Bronx River Alliance's conservation crew, which restores native habitat along the river. "It's not the kind of work you hear of people doing in the Bronx. Usually it's in the suburbs or the countryside," she says as she leans against her truck. She adds: "I don't think I would be here if it weren't for this work."

TRACY TULLIS

Tracy Tullis is a freelance writer living in Brooklyn.

EXCHANGE

(Continued From Page 2)

who are killed. Thanks for this marvelous piece. May it help to wake up our sleeping nation!

MAJ. (CHAPLAIN) WILLIAM G. CHRYSTAL
US Army (Retired)

Portland, Me.

■ The sobering facts presented by Chris Hedges and Laila Al-Arian are ordinary features of war. If we are shocked and surprised by such incidents, it is only because we deceive ourselves about what war is all about. Civilians always suffer the brunt of war. They suffer most of the casualties, both through direct hits and through the disease and hunger that accompany massive displacement and the collapse of social infrastructures, and they are routinely terrorized, raped, abused and dehumanized. Even "just" wars are hideously unjust to the men, women and children caught in their path. Whatever their political persuasion, anyone who advocates the use of military force is morally obliged to consider, and should be held accountable for, the inevitably tragic human consequences.

DAVID LIVINGSTONE SMITH, *Author*
The Most Dangerous Animal:
Human Nature and the Origins of War

Goldvein, Va.

■ Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."

I have no doubt that when the United States puts young men and women in impossible situations for extended periods, bad things will happen. These kids are just trying to stay alive. What is happening in Iraq is not their fault. It is our fault for putting them there in the first place. Lest we forget, we are in Iraq because the American people were lied to again and again and again by the Bush Administration in the months leading up to this war. And our so-called "free" press went along for the ride. The war in Iraq was and is a sham. These kids and the Iraqi people are paying the price. It is a horrible tragedy.

DOUG MACKALL

Braintree, Mass.

■ While this is an important aspect of the war and needs to be confronted, I fear it will be used by those who wish to demonize the military.

PAUL GIANDOMENICO

Frankfurt, Germany

■ Perhaps it's no surprise that a draft dodger led us into this quagmire of senseless violence. General Sherman could have told him that war is hell, and this story is a precise illustration of that maxim. War puts people in contexts that lead them, indeed often force them, to commit atrocious deeds. Even the most just war, World War II, is full of atrocity—even on the side of the good guys. That is what makes war hell.

Kurt Vonnegut knew this when he wrote *Slaughterhouse-Five*. War is an unlikely means of bringing democracy to a country. An attempt to do so by a morally bankrupt Administration too busy violating its nation's Constitution to properly plan a war, incompetent to the core as a result of rampant cronyism, unable to admit mistakes or listen to its own military advisers is bound to fail.

TOM CLARK

Baltimore

■ It saddens me to read about this hellish situation. This war has devastated our military—morally, emotionally, in every way. I can't imagine what it must be like to be over there and feel that random shooting is the only way you are going to return home. We don't honor the troops when we put them in impossible situations.

ANGELA ALVAREZ

Austin, Tex.

■ War is hell. I'm reminded of the crimes committed by Americans in World War II. Our troops used derogatory terms for Iraqi citizens—not much different from what we called the Germans and Japanese. We shot unarmed civilians for not following rules then as well. I hate hearing stories like these told by our returning troops, but I can't fault them. War is truly hell. Just ask someone who's seen it.

WILLIAM REED

IN THE DARK THEY ARE ALL THE SAME

■ In Patricia Williams's column in the last issue, Justice Antonin Scalia was appointed by President Reagan, not Bush Senior.

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DOUG CHAYKA

I'm Not the Man I Used to Be

ANDREAS HUYSSEN

PEELING THE ONION.
By Günter Grass.
Harcourt. 432 pp. $26.

The onion is not a refined vegetable. It is a cheap, humble staple used in cooking the world over. As a representative of German literature, Günter Grass has always been the onion to Thomas Mann's artichoke—down-to-earth, exuberantly realistic, picaresque rather than sophisticated or Olympian. *Peeling the Onion* fulfills such expectations and more. In Grass's literary memoir the onion is a metaphor for the complex and slippery layers of human memory: "The onion has many skins. A multitude of skins. Peeled, it renews itself; chopped, it brings tears; only during peeling does it speak the truth."

In *The Tin Drum*, the 1959 novel that made his reputation and won him the 1999 Nobel Prize, the onion brought both tears and truth, but there Grass was sending up the clammed-up world of early postwar Germany, which lacked the words—the conscience—to come to terms with its recent past. "In the Onion Cellar," the title of a famous chapter in the novel, refers to a popular nightclub in Düsseldorf's Altstadt (Old Town) run by a man whose hobby is shooting sparrows on the banks of the Rhine. At the club, he ceremoniously serves onions with cutting boards and knives to his guests—businessmen, doctors, lawyers, artists, government officials and their wives, mistresses or secretaries—who sit at scrubbed plank tables slicing the vegetable. The ritual produces a flood of bottled-up tears accompanied by confessions, revelations and self-accusations. The onion juice overcomes the post-Nazi inability to mourn, diagnosed by psychoanalysts Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich some ten years later as the social pathology of the West German "economic miracle." But there is something fundamentally suspect about this kind of "overcoming." Grass's satire laid bare the ambiguity of such self-serving confessions.

Düsseldorfers always knew that the model for the Onion Cellar was the artists' hangout Czikos in the Altstadt. When *The Tin Drum* was published, the Czikos was still famous for its piping hot, generously peppered goulash, which indeed brought people to tears, if not to confessions and revelations. In Grass's memoir, the Onion Cellar acquires another dimension. It was at the Czikos in the 1950s that Grass and two friends performed their own version of jazz—a flute, a banjo and Grass's washboard in lieu of Oskar Matzerath's tin drum. Czikos, Grass informs us, was also the site of an encounter so typical of the mingling of things German with things American at the time. One evening, after a jam session in Düsseldorf, Louis Armstrong dropped in. Intrigued by the flute's transformation of German folk songs into jazz rhythms and blues, Armstrong had someone pick up his horn at his hotel, and then sat in with Grass and his friends on a few tunes. Blues in the Onion Cellar: The scene richly suggests how American culture could nurture rebellious—though still apolitical—energies during the postwar restoration under West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer.

The Tin Drum, by contrast, was explic-

Andreas Huyssen, Villard Professor of German and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, is a founding editor of New German Critique *and the author, most recently, of* Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory.

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itly political, satirizing everyday life under Fascism and the postwar emotional hardening of the collective German mind (evoked by the Onion Cellar's theater of repression and self-indulgent release). A landmark in postwar German literature, the novel confronted Germans with the legacies of the Third Reich in the ambiguous tale of Oskar Matzerath, the tin drummer. Matzerath's story spans the war and immediate postwar years—roughly the same period of many of the events retold and transformed in Grass's memoir. But where the novel creatively transformed life into literature, the reader now witnesses the process in reverse. Here, however, almost fifty years after the publication of *The Tin Drum*, it is Grass's legacy as truth-teller that is in question.

The "revelation" that caused such an uproar late last summer—that for a few months at the end of the war the author served as a drafted member of the Waffen SS—has not been dampened by the crocodile tears shed by the nouveaux riches and bohemian intellectuals gathered in the Onion Cellar. Contrition and self-accusation have never characterized Grass's work or self-image, and the memoir is no exception. The onion's "truth" is rather, perhaps, a final footnote to the all too well-known story of the last Hitler Youth generation, the 16- and 17-year-old boys drafted in the closing months of the war to stave off Germany's inevitable military defeat; those who returned alive successfully established themselves as the first generation of a postwar democratic West Germany after the alleged *Stunde Null*—Zero Hour, the fall of the Reich, which was experienced as both defeat and liberation. Unlike some of his peers, Grass had never made a secret of the fact that as a member of the Hitler Youth he had believed in the Führer and volunteered for the submarines at 16. But he never made public his service in the Waffen SS, an elite Nazi fighting unit declared a criminal organization at the Nuremberg trials.

The chorus of denunciations in Germany came from all sides—from those on the right who had always hated Grass's social democratic politics and "immoral" writing, from those on the radical left who considered him a captive to reformist Social Democrats and from a younger German generation resentful that old-timers like Grass, Martin Walser and Hans Magnus Enzensberger are still stealing the limelight.

I, too, felt betrayed by a literary idol of my youth when I first heard about Grass's membership in the Waffen SS. I, too, was tempted to ride the moral high horse: How could Grass, famous since the 1960s for accusing high officials in the West German government of hiding their Nazi past and insisting on public penance, keep this secret for so long? How could he have left even his biographers with the assumption that, like so many other teenagers in 1944–45, he served only as a *Flakhelfer*, a youth conscript, rather than as a member of the Waffen SS? And why reveal it now, just as his memoir was hitting the market? Was it the need of a writer approaching his 80th birthday to come clean, or was it a clever marketing strategy? Or was it simply his wish, as he claims unapologetically in the memoir, to have the last word, denying his many opponents the pleasure of finding out first? For discovery was inevitable. The POW papers documenting his Waffen SS membership are unambiguous. It was just that nobody, not even his biographers, had bothered to check the details.

How could Grass, famous for accusing high officials in West Germany of hiding their Nazi past, keep his secret for so long?

The reasons for Grass's silence lie safely hidden in the memoir. And in his public statements since *Peeling the Onion* was published in Germany late last summer, he has been no more forthcoming about his decision to remain silent about this aspect of his past, further fueling the outrage of his critics (not a few of them disappointed admirers). To many, his legacy not just as a public intellectual but as a writer has been seriously damaged. After my initial reaction, however, I felt increasingly reluctant to point the finger at someone whose self-righteous moralizing about German politics had annoyed me time and again over the past few decades—particularly his stubborn insistence on the division of Germany as permanent penance for the crimes of Nazism and his often shrill anti-Americanism. To moralize about Grass's lack of candor just seemed too easy.

And when I began to peel the onion by reading the memoir, I was further convinced that my sense of betrayal had overshot its mark. Grass comes down hard and unsentimentally on his inability as a young man to read the signs of the times—the nonconformist fellow student who one day disappeared from the classroom; the Catholic teacher who ended up in a nearby concentration camp; his mother's hints about the persecution of the Jews. Indoctrinated as he was, he saw and looked away. Günter Grass's *éducation politique* was slow in taking shape, and his memoir acknowledges it.

Reading the skins of the onion, Grass provides a vivid account of his adolescence in the cramped, petit-bourgeois Danzig milieu that made the Nazi promises of heroism and adventure on the seas look like such an appealing escape. The reality was decidedly less romantic: Grass survived by the skin of his teeth and sheer luck in the chaos of the war's last months, escaping through the woods after his tank unit was decimated in a surprise attack by the advancing Soviet army. Quite plausibly, he claims never to have fired a single shot. The new division of the Waffen SS into which he was drafted fell apart under the Soviet onslaught almost as soon as it was formed.

This is not the story of an exceptional youth but of a 17-year-old German everyman, viewed unsparingly by the same man six decades later. Of course, there are lapses of memory, uncertainties about details. Grass acknowledges them head-on, if sometimes a bit too coyly. Not everything is written securely in the peels of the onion. But the fact that he describes his youthful self alternately in the first and third person is not evidence of evasion, or of some mendacious effort to blur the line between memoir and fiction, as some have charged. Rather, this oscillation in perspective marks the distance between the memoirist and his teenage self.

As the narrative moves to the late 1940s and into the following decade, Grass remains true to his earlier self in his descriptions of young Günter's three desires: real hunger, especially in the "hunger years" immediately following the end of the war; adolescent hunger for sex; and a budding hunger for art. Everything Grass writes about life in Düsseldorf and Berlin at the time resonates vividly, evoked in his signature picaresque tone and with his typical focus on the absurd in everyday life. Of public culture and political history, however, he has strikingly little to say: Neither his later vocal hostility toward the Adenauer restoration nor his engagement with the Social Democrats is evident yet. Like many Germans after the war, Grass shunned politics and found consolation (and, in his case, a vocation) in art, mostly in poetry, drawing and sculpture.

The chapters on the late 1940s and '50s revolve around personal reminiscences—his reunion with his parents, who were dislocated to the Rhineland; his apprenticeship as a stonemason, making tombstones; and his study at the Düsseldorf art academy, where Joseph Beuys was also a student. Later there is the Berlin art scene, with its cold war battles over abstraction; his courtship of Swiss dancer Anna Schwarz; and his

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Dr. Steffanie Seaver PSY.D is an expert in the area of interpersonal relationships. Researcher, author and accomplished public speaker, she has lectured nationwide for over a decade. Dr. Seaver has also been involved with several publications covering relationship and lifestyle issues.

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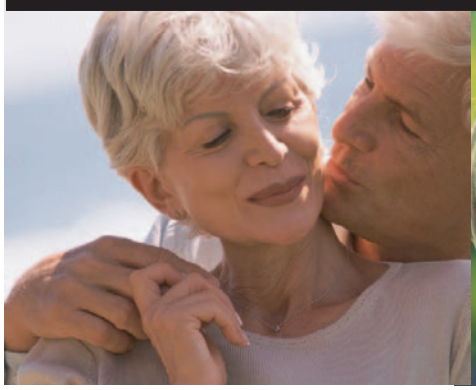

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first success as a literary upstart reading his poems at a meeting of the soon-to-be-famous Group 47. Particularly arresting, and notable for their lack of sentimentality, are his memories of the rather taciturn railroad station goodbye to his unloved father when he left for the war; the great tribute paid to his beloved mother, who died of cancer too early to witness her son's success; and the account of rescuing his sister from an authoritarian Mother Superior and helping her become a midwife instead of a nun. By contrast, Grass's tales of his sexual exploits are rather adolescent, without much detail about his sexual partners. The only relationship treated with the delicacy of long-term intimacy and love is the one with Anna, his first wife.

Interesting though not revelatory are the brief accounts of his literary formation, his love for Cervantes, seventeenth-century novelist Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen and Alfred Döblin, author of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. In the 1950s conflict between figuration in painting and Modernist abstraction, Grass sided with figuration, a position that reflected his own practice as a graphic artist. In the existentialist controversy of those years he sided with Camus and the absurd against Sartre's Marxist politics, but otherwise he remained wary of fashionable existentialist posing. The few pages describing the years spent in Paris in the late 1950s are remarkably pale. Probably because of his limited French and an even more limited budget, he had minimal connections with the Parisian intellectual scene, and his work on *The Tin Drum* consumed ever more of his time. Even now, it seems that the novel drains energy from the memoir. We hear but don't learn much about his Paris friendship with poet and Holocaust survivor Paul Celan. The Algerian war rumbles on in the background. In 1958 Grass wins first prize with the Group 47, and in 1959 *The Tin Drum* appears, to enthusiastic acclaim and public controversy. A year later he and Anna and their children are back in Berlin, and then, all of a sudden, Grass runs out of onions and concludes his memoir.

Ending his account with the publication of *The Tin Drum* is, of course, rather convenient, for it allows Grass to evade the lingering and legitimate question of why he never discussed his membership in the Waffen SS until now. Had he done so during the controversy over Helmut Kohl and Ronald Reagan's 1985 visit to the Bitburg cemetery, with its SS graves, or during the *Historikerstreit*, the German historians' quarrel over the uniqueness of Nazi crimes, his voice could have added substantially to the debate. There is no little irony in the fact that the vociferous and inquisitional demand for contrition and breast-beating should now confront an author who never hesitated to make such demands of others. Still, the Grass affair doesn't tell us much about the quality of his memoir. And his politics always had more bite in his literary writings than in his political pronouncements.

Peeling the onion, slippery skin after slippery skin, is a surprisingly apt metaphor for delving into one's memories. It captures the unreliability of all human memory, its layering and restructuring by partial forgetfulness and corrupted recollections. The other recurrent metaphor in the book is amber, evoking another kind of memory. Amber, tree sap hardened into a yellow-brown mineral, often encasing an insect and found plentifully on the Baltic beaches of Grass's lost *Heimat*, stands for the unchanging, petrified memory image. To give but one example: Looking at a honey-colored translucent piece of amber later in life, Grass sees not the proverbial encased insect but himself in full-length outline at 14 and naked. The amber serves here as a projection screen of an image of the pubescent boy ingrained in the narrator's mind, whereas the onion's skins need to be read one after another. Reading and seeing, writing and projecting the past are the two modes governing Grass's writing. The play between onion and amber thus brings a new literary dimension to that inevitable weaving together of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, as Goethe had it—the mix of fiction and truth in all autobiography and memoir. The power of any memoir hinges on the right mix, and readers will part ways in assessing it. Critics who chide Grass for couching his Nazi past in literary metaphors, for questioning the reliability of his own memories, for admitting forgetfulness and for hiding behind some of the same complex narrative techniques we know from his novels may score political points, but they betray a simplistic understanding of the genre.

Perhaps the most fascinating thing we learn from Grass's memoir is how slowly he arrived at the character of Oskar Matzerath, and how hesitantly he moved from an apolitical understanding of art to writing perhaps the most powerful political novel of the postwar period. This section of the memoir reproduces in microcosm the history of the Federal Republic in those years—the initial confrontation with the political and cultural fallout from the Third Reich, culminating in the commemorative obsessions of more recent decades, when the politics of memory became a worldwide phenomenon. When Grass, who was living in Berlin at the time, witnessed the East German workers' revolt on June 17, 1953, near Potsdamer Platz, he had no hunger for politics or memory, nor any desire to write the great postwar German novel. He kept working as an artist and poet. He first won recognition as a writer almost by default, when he read his poems with the Group 47 in 1955. Expressionist poet Gottfried Benn—himself burdened by his initial support for Hitler but still a major literary figure in the early '50s—read Grass's poetry at the time and predicted that he would one day write prose.

Although Grass never gave up on poetry, he achieved fame for his novels, especially the Danzig trilogy. It is fascinating to read how the novel that ultimately won him the Nobel Prize emerged inchoately, indeed almost by accident. Toward the end of the memoir, Grass explains his shift from poetry to prose as a compulsion to abandon his earlier apolitical and aestheticist stance and to face the German past: "I could easily have engaged in productive time-wasting and made myself look interesting at Group 47 meetings with new artistic devices if the massive weight of the German past and hence my own could have somehow been ignored. But it stood in the way. It tripped me up. There was no getting around it. As if prescribed for me, it remained impenetrable: here was a lava flow that had barely cooled down, there a stretch of solid basalt, itself sitting on even older deposits. And layer upon layer had to be carried away, sorted, named. Words were needed. And a first sentence was still missing."

But then the compulsion to write, as he once put it in typically blunt fashion, hit him like diarrhea. The old Grass gave a political twist to the same idea when he wrote in his recent novel *Crabwalk*: "History, or, to be more precise, the history we Germans have repeatedly mucked up, is a clogged toilet. We flush and flush, but the shit keeps rising." Indeed, this does sum up more than just the origins of *The Tin Drum*.

The critic Hans Mayer once divided German artists into martyrs and representatives. If Mann was a representative of German culture in the traditional sense, Grass, who likes to claim persecution by the media, never was a martyr but always a representative of the democratic postwar Western republic, warts and all. Like his Danzig trilogy, the author nearing the age of 80, with his mustache, his pipe and his political pronouncements, stands like a block of lava in the midst of a cultural formation that has become history. In that sense, for better or worse, Grass remains who he was before: a major representative of German post–World War II literature. And he remains so in a perhaps even deeper sense than before the late revelation and continuing evasion in his memoir. ■

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The Lives of Others

CARLA KAPLAN

NANCY CUNARD: Heiress, Muse, Political Idealist. By Lois Gordon. Columbia. 447 pp. $32.50.

If you were looking for a paragon of the flapper, Nancy Cunard would seem to be an ideal candidate. The daughter of British aristocrats, Cunard was a stylish, rail-thin beauty, alternately celebrated as an icon of rebellion and reviled as a sexual adventuress. Harold Acton claimed she inspired (and probably slept with) "half the poets and novelists of the 'twenties.'" As much as anyone, she embodied the sexual freedom of the 1920s; indeed, her slick-haired, smoking, dark-eyed image became synonymous with that decade. (Cunard herself could not have cared less: "Why the smarming over 'The Twenties'?" she would later sneer. "To hell with those days! They weren't so super-magnificent!") Yet she also fought tirelessly for other kinds of freedom ("equality of races…of sexes…of classes"—the "three things that mattered"), taking up the cause of workers, black Americans, anarchists, Spanish Republicans, anticolonialist revolutionaries and avant-garde artists. *The New Yorker*'s exacting Paris correspondent, Janet Flanner (*aka* Genêt), judged her to have "the best mind of any Anglo-Saxon woman in Europe." You wouldn't know any of this from Cunard's reputation: She is mainly remembered, if she's remembered at all, as a rich white girl who crossed the Atlantic to sleep with black men. Not that Cunard would have been surprised. As she once remarked, "Reputations are simply hell and there's nothing—or little enough—to be done about changing them."

Lois Gordon's new biography of Cunard, the first in almost thirty years and only the third to date, vividly reconstructs the Cunard legend and brings her back to life as a writer and activist. We see her through the eyes of friends and lovers like T.S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, Aldous Huxley, Wyndham Lewis, Louis Aragon, Constantin Brancusi, Man Ray, Tristan Tzara, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams and Cecil Beaton, as well as Greta Garbo and Tallulah Bankhead. Cunard scorned celebrity, but it came naturally to her. Some of the notoriety was of her own making. She fueled her legendary status when it suited her to do so, posing for famous artists, drawing attention to her striking looks, trading on her family name with potential publishers and expecting an international audience for her 1931 pamphlet "Black Man and White Ladyship," about her mother's horrified reaction to her black lover, even as she called press conferences to demand that newspapers leave her alone.

By the time she died, in 1965, Cunard bore little resemblance to the flapper she had been in her youth. She was frail, cantankerous, in terrible pain and nearly destitute from decades of giving away her money. At the very end she dodged doctors and friends, collapsing in the street and dying alone in a public hospital ward, where she'd spent her last days writing an epic antiwar poem. The *Evening Standard* reported her death as the "sad, lonely farewell to a toast of the Twenties." By then, Cunard's legend as Britain's bad girl had almost entirely overshadowed her achievements.

Those achievements were hardly negligible, as Gordon rightly notes. "Black Man and White Ladyship" laid siege to a number of taboos around race, sexuality and the family. In 1934 Cunard edited *Negro: An Anthology*, an extraordinary collection of poetry, fiction and nonfiction by 150 writers, among them Harlem Renaissance luminaries W.E.B. Du Bois, Walter White, Countee Cullen, George Schuyler, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Caribbean radical George Padmore and such white writers as William Carlos Williams, Josephine Herbst, Louis Zukofsky and Theodore Dreiser. This pan-Africanist collection featured stories, poems, plays, translations, dialect examples, sermons, musical scores and photographs, as well as essays on slavery, Marxism, imperialism, the arts, interracial marriage, American racism (notably Cunard's account of the Scottsboro case), anticolonial movements in Africa and texts translated by a young Samuel Beckett. Cunard was also an outspoken opponent of Fascism and colonialism, one of the only women to report from the front lines in the Spanish Civil War and one of the only white journalists to work as a full-time correspondent for the Associated Negro Press. The fixation on Cunard's bed partners, illustrious though they were, says more about our own preoccupations than it does about hers.

Shortly after her death, Cunard's case was taken up by her champion Hugh Ford, whose excellent Festschrift, *Nancy Cunard: Brave Poet, Indomitable Rebel, 1896–1965*, remains the best source for much of what has been written about her since. Ford also shepherded *Negro* back into print in 1970. The original massive, eight-pound volume—855 oversized pages—had printing costs no publisher would cover, and Cunard, who refused to cut the book, paid for it with her own dwindling funds (her family had largely cut her off) and with proceeds from slander suits against racist press coverage of her activities in Harlem. Ford's edition omits roughly half of the book's contributions, which is a pity: Without Cunard's ambitious disarray, it is hard to see what she was after.

Why would a wealthy heiress risk her money and name on a venture that everyone predicted would fail—including her black lover, Henry Crowder, to whom Cunard dedicated the book? Cunard's biographers have tended to interpret her audacity in psychological terms—a reading that Cunard inadvertently encouraged by her refusal, or inability, to separate her personal life from her politics. Even many of her closest friends were appalled, for example, by her public denunciation of her mother as a racist—"Her Ladyship's own snobbery is quite simple.… *It is a stultifying hypocrisy*"—and by her suggestion that Lady Cunard attend one of the "choicer lynchings" in the "cracker southern states of U.S.A." Ford suggests that the answer goes back to Cunard's background. His introduction to the edited *Negro* describes a childhood dream of Cunard's in which she danced around an African fire to the beat of tom-toms and also a troubling story, possibly apocryphal, in which a young black man offers to pay Cunard for a "small kindness." Her reply: "I am your mother. There is no payment due."

Whether or not Cunard actually made this outrageous remark, it's just the kind of thing that, understandably, leads people to dismiss her. Even Ford, who acknowl-

Carla Kaplan, the Davis Distinguished Professor of American Literature at Northeastern University, is a Guggenheim Fellow and a Fellow at Harvard's W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research. Her books include Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters *(Doubleday) and the forthcoming* Miss Anne in Harlem: The White Women of the Black Renaissance *(HarperCollins).*

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edges the complexity of accounting for Cunard's choices and for the pleasures they gave her, leaves us with the impression that her commitment to black causes was compensation for bad parenting, the creation of an imaginary—even delusional—family to replace her unfulfilling one.

Gordon, to her credit, sets out to defend Cunard, to separate the person from the legend, to avoid getting sidetracked or seduced, to seriously reassess the political and artistic contributions. But by the time we've gotten through Cunard's childhood, it's probably already too late. The very myth that Gordon seeks to debunk is already reasserting itself.

Cunard grew up the only child of mismatched parents who left her care in the hands of the many servants employed at Nevill Holt, the 13,000-acre thirteenth-century Cunard family estate, which resembled an entire English village and is said to have occupied more square footage than the New York Public Library. Her father, Bache Cunard, was an apolitical and mostly antisocial man who eschewed family lineage and the family's shipping business to pursue his passion for decorative metalsmithing, much like the obsessive Colonel Aureliano Buendía in García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Bache Cunard could hardly have been more unlike his wife, Maud Burke, a wealthy San Franciscan; the $2 million dowry that she paid for the title "Lady" would be roughly equivalent to $500 million today. Lady Cunard's passions were for society. Her ambition, handily achieved, was to become one of England's most celebrated hostesses.

Cunard's mother introduced her to an amazing array of male artists and intellectuals, including George Moore, W. Somerset Maugham, W.B. Yeats, Ford Madox Ford, George Bernard Shaw and James Joyce. Lady Cunard's parties gave her daughter a taste for high culture and European travel and an early facility with languages (Cunard spoke French, Spanish, Italian and German and, as an adult, often wrote in Spanish). These parties probably also contributed to a high tolerance for male-dominated cultural circles, where remarks such as T.S. Eliot's "women grown intellectual grow dull" were common, and possibly fueled an early dislike of excess, shallowness and domestic dishonesty. Although Nancy followed her mother's example into an early marriage to a man who shared none of her passion for culture or conversation, she left her husband in less than two years and never married again.

An heiress like Cunard could look forward to a life of marriage, some philanthropy and a pastime or two—"her hobby in life will probably be dogs," one newspaper predicted. The British press wanted her to stay "sweet, fresh, baby…dollish… and full of fun…[an] exquisite specimen of English girlhood." This gave her a blueprint for what to avoid, even as a young child. Though she was alarmed by her first sight of hobos—"dirty, slouchy men with stubby chins"—that didn't discourage her from wanting to be one of them. "I wanted to run away and be a vagabond," she told George Moore when she was a girl. A little later, as a debutante in evening clothes, Cunard anguished over what her friend Iris Tree described as "the guilt of our immunity" from suffering. Like much early antiwar poetry, her first poem, published in 1916, tried to imagine life for one of the "Soldiers Fallen in Battle" (the poem's title):

> These die obscure and leave no heritage
> For them no lamps are lit, no prayers said,
> And all men soon forget that they are dead,
> And their dumb names unwrit on memory's page.

Throughout her life, Cunard wanted to write these "dumb names" back into memory.

Sometimes the least effusive people seem to respond most readily to the suffering of others. And Cunard had a reputation for being especially chilly; men complained that she was a calculating lover, incapable of proper sentimentality. But when it came to the causes she embraced, her passion was boundless, as was, apparently, her acceptance of material discomfort. She would not hesitate to work eighteen hours a day setting type in semidarkness for her press, The Hours, housed in an old stable on her French farmhouse, or to trudge twenty miles in the rain to a Spanish refugee camp. When Britain's unemployed staged hunger marches in the 1930s, Cunard accompanied them, Gordon writes, in "a man's overcoat and overshoes, an aviator's helmet, and mufflers, scarves, and gloves."

When she learned about American racism and the "agonies of the Negroes," from Henry Crowder and others, she not only embarked on her *Negro* anthology but befriended the mothers of the Scottsboro boys, exchanging letters with them and taking over much of the fundraising involved in their campaign: organizing parties, dances, film screenings, demonstrations, petitions and theater performances. She

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responded similarly to the "eternity of anguish" that West Indian and African anticolonialists were fighting and, especially, to the Spanish Republicans' attempts to defeat Fascism. She first went to Spain in 1936 as a journalist; what she saw there, she wrote, "took hold of me entirely." For the next three years she volunteered wherever her help was accepted: reporting, delivering supplies, aiding relocation efforts, driving the wounded, agitating for the release of intellectuals, organizing food drives, visiting refugees and spiriting people into hiding at her house in Réanville. "Spain is not politics but life," she wrote. "Its immediate future will affect every human who has a sense of what life and its facts mean." She found it "unthinkable" and "degenerate" that anyone could fail to identify with the Spanish Republican struggle, and she braved bombings, arrest, mud, shootings, trenches, sleet and starvation to be with partisans on the front lines and to get to refugee camps.

Cunard's self-awareness evaporated when her political energies were engaged. And those who differed with her seemed to her incomprehensible. "Her vast anger at injustice embraced the universe," Solita Solano, a writer and companion of Janet Flanner, said. "There was no place left in her for the working of any other emotional pattern.... It was her mania, her madness." Cunard leapt from sympathizing with the oppressed to trying to become them, a literal form of identification that alarmed her friends and delighted her detractors, who seized upon it as evidence that she was unstable. In one of her favorite poems, which she called her own "Battle Hymn," she imagined herself as a black man bidding his "fierce farewell to the United States" and threatening to "tear the Crackers limb from limb" as "vengeance...for the days I've slaved," before he "heads for an Africa that should be his." Imagining this point of view gave Cunard a new perspective on racism. That assuming this man's voice might be seen as presumptuous, if not offensive, no more occurred to her than the possibility that she—and the scandalmongering press that followed in her wake—would be unwelcome in Harlem. ("Nancy's back," some of her black Harlem friends would remark, "we're in trouble.") Whether marching with hunger strikers or showing up in Harlem, Cunard expected to fit in and be accepted.

In the arguments over identity that roiled the 1920s and continue to reverberate today—when does empathy become appropriation? is speaking for others unethical? what links "love and theft"?—Cunard took

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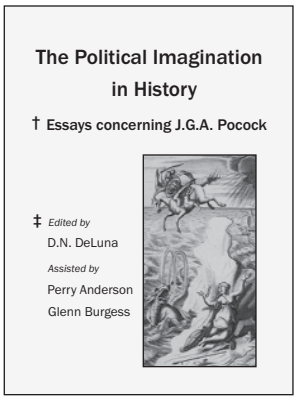

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a position that was at once admirable and disconcerting, particularly for someone of her abundant privilege: admirable because she identified with the oppressed with a rare passion; disconcerting because in trying to merge with the objects of her concern, she displayed scarcely any awareness that this performance was a further manifestation of her privilege. This left her often incapable of distinguishing between being genuinely helpful, as she was in Spain and in the American anti-lynching campaign, and appearing to others as Lady Bountiful visiting the slums. But Cunard was convinced that she could—and should—shed her background as an act of solidarity and will, an expression of the "vital life-theme" of human "contact." When she declared that she had Africa in "my ego, my soul," or wrote that "I speak as if I were a Negro myself," she felt she was demonstrating not arrogance but connection. The "Authors Take Sides" form she invented—"the tragedies of suffering humanity [must] become as their own"—was another manifestation of this belief in the possibility of changing places with others. Failure to do so left her feeling "sick at heart." Cunard has elicited a fair amount of abuse for this stance. The noted feminist scholar Susan Gubar pronounces her a "schizophrenic, self-loathing…vamp who used her social status, her money, and her promiscuity" for the "appropriation of a [black] culture very much not her own."

Happily, Gordon provides a more balanced and sympathetic account. Her Nancy Cunard is brave, hardworking, dedicated and honorable, a woman of serious ambition and admirable talent. She is generous, funny and well loved by her friends. She is wry and self-effacing. Unfortunately, she is also hopelessly introspective and romantic, although lacking, in Gordon's view, "that sense of wholeness or self-worth that makes for appropriate self-love—and subsequent love of an other." And in accounting for Cunard's politics, Gordon succumbs to the temptations of amateur psychology. Like professor Ann Douglas, who dismisses Cunard as a "profligate…Electra figure" whose entire political life amounts to no more than a "blow she struck at her mother"—or Cunard's former associate Wyn Henderson, who viewed her "identification with the underdog" as "an outlet…for feeling or love that can neither be offered nor accepted in the case of individuals"—Gordon lights on the minutiae of childhood disappointment, as if political love, or empathy, were always somehow suspect. Cunard's racial politics, she writes, were her compensation for poor family "bonds." Her lifelong "identification with those who were unempowered or unjustly punished," she claims, stemmed from being "whacked on her hands" when she was a child. And so on.

Cunard was permanently damaged, Gordon insists, by being "deprived" as a child of "the parental nurturing and devotion that makes for self-confident adult independence." Cunard's later politics, she claims, were extensions of her feelings for Henry Crowder, who provided some of the nurturing she lacked. "Crowder was the 'first cause' not only of her project *Negro*," Gordon writes, "but, one can assume by extension, of all the human rights causes that consumed her for the rest of her life." Even *Negro* looks, to Gordon, like Cunard's surrogate family: "*Negro* was the child she would never have.… Nancy seemed fulfilled in creating *Negro* in the way a parent bonds forever with a child."

These personalizations of Cunard's politics are not based on new information. In fact, Gordon's biography does not differ significantly from Anne Chisholm's, published almost thirty years ago. And it relies on many of the same sources, including Crowder's posthumously published memoir *As Wonderful As All That?*, a bitter post-affair account about which there has always been much question of actual authorship. Even though Crowder elsewhere praised Cunard and admired her courage, Gordon leans heavily on this memoir's most damning statements. Gordon also ignores some of the better recent work on Cunard, such as Jane Marcus's spirited defense of her as an overlooked heroine of feminism and the left. And she doesn't ask why Cunard's male friends, many of whom caused fewer eyebrows to be raised for even more out-

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ILLINOIS

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PENNSYLVANIA

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■ September 14–16, "Beyond Prison: A New Justice Paradigm." Workshop at Pendle Hill with Laura Magnani, criminal justice worker, author, Quaker. For people who have some familiarity with the prison system. Contact Pendle Hill, 338 Plush Mill Road, Wallingford, PA 19086-6023. (800)742-3150, ext. 3. Register online: www.pendlehill.org.

WASHINGTON, DC

Christian Clergy for Impeachment

■ September 15: Members and friends of CCFI will meet on the Mall at the ANSWER Coalition Rally in a location bearing the group's website banner. To help achieve the goal of the rally—attendance of more than a million anti-war activists—we urge all signatories of CCFI to attend for a day of sweet solidarity. If you can help with fliers, communications, refreshments, bumper stickers, etc., please e-mail the address on the "contact" page at www.christianclergyforimpeachment.com.

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landish behavior, were able to get away with the same politics of identification that Cunard was criticized for practicing too recklessly. Even Carl Van Vechten, the period's most notorious white race-crosser (Cunard called him "the spirit of vulgarity"), is more often given the benefit of the doubt.

Michael Arlen remarked that Cunard was like "some invention, ghastly or not, of her own.… She didn't fit anywhere." That inconsistency or "passionate inconstancy," as William Carlos Williams called it, consisted of, as one male friend described it, "baffling contradictions"—she was passionate but unromantic, loyal but unforgiving, unconventional but fastidious, emotional but unsentimental, hedonistic but anorexic. Huxley summed her up as "one of those women who have the temperament of a man." Ghastly indeed. We don't have much in the way of flattering language for high-fashion, pleasure-seeking, charming and seductive female revolutionaries. Trying to classify or categorize Cunard must have been like trying to put together Emma Goldman and Myrna Loy, or Paris Hilton and Betty Friedan. But beyond uncanniness, with which Cunard abounds, is the problem of what to say about someone whose steely determination could be as alienating and self-destructive as it was effective and admirable, whose failures were often as spectacular as her successes, and who, despite titling a poem "Remorse," seems to have felt very little of it. To her credit, Cunard knew these things about herself.

Nancy Cunard paid a high price for her nonconformity. She was disinherited, arrested, beaten, institutionalized and eventually declared insane. Her legacy includes her refusal to regret, or attempt to explain, any of it. ■

FILMS

Stuff Happens

STUART KLAWANS

NO END IN SIGHT • THE DEVIL CAME ON HORSEBACK • THE SUGAR CURTAIN • SUNSHINE

Like a dictator's statue in a grandiose plaza, the Iraq War can be seen and hated from various angles. Some filmmakers have loathed it through the eyes of US soldiers (in *Gunner Palace* and *Occupation: Dreamland*), others from the viewpoint of Iraqi civilians (*My Country, My Country* and *Iraq in Fragments*). These documentarians observe the war from ground level. Charles Ferguson, who wrote, produced and directed the invaluable *No End in Sight*, hates the war from a novel perspective. He looks at it from the top, or as close to it as he can get.

At telling moments in *No End in Sight*, an inserted title will dryly explain that Ferguson failed to secure an interview with this or that subject: Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Paul Bremer. But here are some of the people who did talk to him: Gen. Jay Garner, who ostensibly ran Iraq for a few weeks in 2003 as director of the short-lived Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA); Ambassador Barbara Bodine, in charge of Baghdad for ORHA; Col. Paul Hughes, director of strategic policy for the occupation (2003); Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, former chief of staff to Colin Powell; and Robert Hutchings, chairman of the National Intelligence Council (2003–05).

Ferguson relies on other sorts of witnesses as well (journalists, academics, soldiers, Iraqi officials) and a dense compilation of archival footage that ranges in effect from absurdity (Rumsfeld's news conferences) to horror. But it's the well-credentialed informants who establish the character of *No End in Sight*, by means of their privileged knowledge of the war and their shared experience of having been overruled by the Cheney-Rumsfeld inner circle. These are the people who weren't listened to. By adopting their perspective, Ferguson unquestionably gives a slanted, partial view of the war—but one that is indispensable and peculiarly damning.

The peculiarity is evident in the way Ferguson allots his screen time. Although *No End in Sight* recounts more than twenty years of history, from the Iran-Iraq war to the present, by far the longest section of the film covers a period of just four months, from January 20 to May 23, 2003. On the first of those dates, while preparing to invade, Bush assigned responsibility for post-war Iraq to the Pentagon, which would act through the newly created ORHA. On the latter date, Paul Bremer of the even newer Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) finished undoing everything that ORHA had been trying to achieve.

ORHA had begun assembling an interim Iraqi government. CPA dismissed the attempt. ORHA had sought to work with whatever Iraqi managerial class it could locate. CPA effectively got rid of all trained personnel by banning Baath Party members from public employment. ORHA had been registering members of the Iraqi army with the aim of organizing a police force and national guard. On May 23, the CPA disbanded the army, plunging into desperation the families of some 400,000 now-jobless men with guns. In Ferguson's eyes, the history of the Iraq War is essentially a story about these early, rotten decisions, which by the end of May 2003, he argues, had already consigned the country to chaos and civil war.

How does Ferguson go about making this case? A typical sequence (reconstructed here in approximation) might begin with archival footage of the looted Baghdad Museum and the immolated National Archive, with a voiceover narration (spoken by Campbell Scott) setting forth the bare facts of the event. Iraqis in the ruins cry out the heartbroken commentary. From this setup, Ferguson cuts to interviews with Hughes, who testifies that US troops were made to stand by ("There was no order to establish martial law"), and with Barbara

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Bodine, who makes it clear that this idleness was deliberate policy. ("The word came from Washington not to interfere with the looting. There was to be no police work.") You see further images of buildings being ripped apart, machinery being carted away in the streets, fires raging, people sifting through rubble. A journalist, in this case Nir Rosen, sums up the situation: "Guys with guns took over—and they were the Iraqi guys with guns." Then comes a clip of Rumsfeld cutting up at a news conference: "Stuff happens."

The method is almost rhythmic in its regularity: sobriety from the voiceover, aptness and force from the archival images, quiet anger from the informants and then a punch line of utter obliviousness from Rumsfeld. Applying this formula to the period that most concerns him, Ferguson reviews each major decision made by the White House—to toss aside the State Department's postwar planning, to occupy Iraq with scarcely enough troops to secure Peoria, to allow Baghdad to be stripped to the walls—and establishes two critical points: The outcome was catastrophic, and the catastrophe was predicted.

But perhaps I should say Ferguson conducts this review for almost every decision. The six months preceding January 2003, when the "intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy" (as the Downing Street memo put it), get only a blink of screen time compared with the four months that followed. Granted, the film acknowledges Bush's haste to make war against Saddam Hussein; but acknowledgment is not prosecution. *No End in Sight* provides scant information about the Bush Administration's knowing lies and none at all about critical matters like the UN weapons-inspection program or the international movement that warned against invasion. (Some correct predictions, evidently, are less respectable than others.) Saddam's crimes, by contrast, take the screen in vivid detail. In this way, the film treats as plausible the first and most disastrous decision.

This approach isn't entirely unexpected. A first-time filmmaker who in his other life was a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, Ferguson is most interested in studying how a clique of top officials, lacking in military experience and self-isolated from dissenting opinion, made mistake after mistake in implementing policy. He is not interested in thinking about a much wider range of people—including Council on Foreign Relations types, prominent journalists and current frontrunners for the Democratic presidential nomination—who acquiesced to the bunglers as they prepared for war.

Not that I'm taking names. I just want to point out that the emphasis conforms to the analysis. If you believe, as Ferguson does, that ORHA personnel were "trying to save a country" (so the voiceover states), then it makes sense to blame the insurgency largely on the CPA's blunders and to date its effective start as the bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad on August 19, 2003. But if you believe that the very existence of ORHA was part of the problem, then you might say the insurgency started much earlier, on April 28 and 30, before Bremer even landed in Iraq. On those dates, US soldiers fired into crowds of demonstrators in Falluja, killing at least thirteen people and wounding many more. *No End in Sight* discusses the later, better-known upheavals in that city, but it does not mention these April protests and deaths, which perhaps had some small influence on anti-American sentiment. To speak of them, even in passing, might suggest that the occupation was doomed from the start—or at the latest from within three weeks of the US conquest of Baghdad.

All of which is merely to say of Ferguson: an interesting slant makes for interesting blind spots. I would judge his film not by its peculiarity but by its power to condemn, which it exercises with stunning authority. *No End in Sight* convicts the Bush Administration more clearly, specifically and forcefully than any previous documentary has done, and more wrenchingly than any book could do. No matter how deeply you read in the growing literature, you will not receive what this film offers: the frustration and sorrow on Barbara Bodine's face, the ragged edge in Paul Hughes's voice, the bafflement in Jay Garner's eyes as he thinks back on his betrayal. Ferguson brings you face to face with the actors in this terrible history, as they recount how Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and Rice went about slaughtering their own soldiers and devastating the people of Iraq.

Shall we say that mistakes were made? *No End in Sight* records so many of them, which were all so obvious, that suspicious minds might wonder if they weren't committed deliberately. Put yourself into Cheney's head, if you dare, and imagine the advantages. A permanently chaotic Iraq might require a permanent US military presence, justifying unbounded wartime powers for the President and providing an inexhaustible supply of Jenkins's ears to wave at Iran. Maybe the ruling clique was so cold-blooded as to want this civil war. Or maybe, as Ferguson suggests, the problem was just that America's political class ceded power to the arrogantly stupid.

No End in Sight begins its national release simultaneously at New York's Film Forum and the E Street Cinema in Washington. Please send everyone you know to see it.

Short Takes: At the heart of Annie Sundberg and Ricki Stern's documentary *The Devil Came on Horseback* is an anguished question by the film's narrator, Brian Steidle: What information would be enough to move the American people to demand an end to the genocide in Darfur? Steidle, who retired at a young age from the Marines, provided much terrifying evidence himself in 2005, when he made public a cache of photographs he'd taken in Sudan while working as an observer for the African Union. *The Devil Came on Horseback* shows (often by restaging) how he came to witness the killing and acquire so many pictures of it, how he became an activist for saving Darfur and how today he presses on, though dismayed by America's continuing inertia. The documentary, despite its occasional arty flourishes, is essentially a vehicle for carrying Steidle's information to still more people in the hope that they will finally compel action. Released by International Film Circuit, this film is an act of conscience—and the bearer of some of the most grisly images I've ever seen.

The Sugar Curtain, by Cuban expatriate Camila Guzmán Urzúa, is political documentary in an altogether different mode: intimate, nostalgic, bittersweet. It revisits in pictures and memories the Cuba where she grew up in the 1970s and '80s—a place and time she recalls as paradisiacal—and tours what little remains of it today. Some of her childhood friends have stayed on; most have left. All share Urzúa's thoughtful, sorrowful love for a golden era that was real to them but turned out to be a Soviet-financed fantasy. Now enjoying a brief theatrical run in New York, appropriately enough at the Pioneer Theater, *The Sugar Curtain* is distributed by First Run/Icarus Films.

Meanwhile, in outer space: One of my favorite actors, Cillian Murphy, is on a rocket ship between Venus and Mercury, zooming toward a blaze of glory in Danny Boyle's *Sunshine*. His mission: to save our planet by reigniting its dying star. I'm sure somebody will soon explain the metaphor, revealing that *Sunshine* is really about the Iraq War, Darfur or maybe Cuba's lost illusions. All I saw was a glossy, gleaming sci-fi clunker in which humanity's main problem can be solved by dropping a bomb. ■

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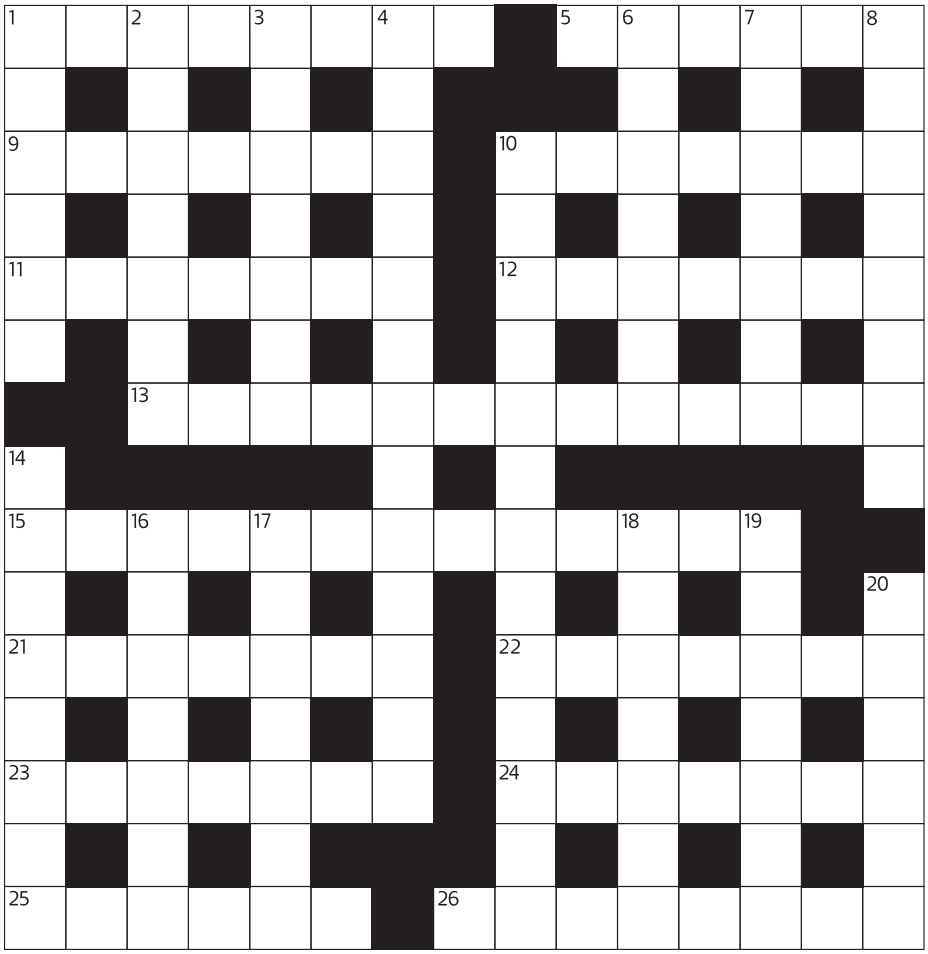
PUZZLE NO. 3092

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 What a cow sometimes does sounds like "browse," being rather unintellectual! (8)

5 Something like a sandwich for each one inside—which is great! (6)

9 Go to North Dakota briefly, and come to nothing with an article in Spanish, "How to Build a Canal Boat." (7)

10 A real wing-ding when you get a bit less than full, being on the sidelines probably. (7)

11 One is wrong to get commonly intoxicated at the capital of Holland—completely stoned at such an early age! (7)

12 Ache badly, missing the point, then eat badly too, but gets tied up this way perhaps. (7)

13 One hears it is a hot time for curing some things, but "head over heels" might describe it. (13)

15 The train can't last because it's wrecked going across the water! (13)

21 Where Providence is shortly to be found surrounding what is played in the orchestra or eaten at a meal. (7)

22 Concerning what Thomas is sometimes associated with causes some disbelief—but it might prove a strong point! (7)

23 Bursts in suddenly, even with a broken stirrup. (7)

24 Take little notice when it gets spoken for—a kid, or a good cause, might be. (7)

25 Well this is in the money, certainly! (6)

26 Certain to be found in the same trouble, but applies a rule this way. (8)

DOWN

1 Where to find the feet might be an old story! (6)

2 Comes out ahead around what might be associated with the market, but they might provide a good view. (7)

3 Oh, I'd see it differently, in a spirit that could prove elemental! (7)

4 Stands up well on occasions of travel, and moves to keep the cold out. (13)

6 Get the tangles out, but a well-known organization has the sound of a nasty dog! (7)

7 A title of respect in some place has a point, very loud at the finish with one. (7)

8 Assistants to the proctor in certain English universities—symbols of Britishers, so-called. (8)

10 One hears it's a way to support a famous poet, showing a degree of something! (13)

14 Proving the leading part's angle is in deep water, perhaps. (8)

16 What you used to find on the Burma Shave signs? Just the opposite! (7)

17 It could keep the contents of a bottle secure, but crept around and around very quietly. (7)

18 Senator Kennedy as a lot of debt chits, which is a real bore! (7)

19 One might start out going from one to ten where the food may be displayed. (7)

20 Foreign studies practiced by some players. (6)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3091

P	H	A	N	T	A	S	M	A	G	O	R	I	A	S
A		N		R		H		S		V		T		C
C	O	N	T	I	N	E	N	T		E	M	E	E	R
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PARNASSUS EQUITY INCOME FUND **Average Annualized Returns (as of 6/30/2007)**	1 Year	5 Year	10 Year	Since Effective (8/31/92)	Gross Expense Ratio	Net Expense Ratio[a]
Equity Income Fund	21.86%	10.80%	11.15%	11.61%	1.07%	1.00%
S&P 500 Index	20.59%	10.70%	7.13%	11.16%	NA	NA

(a) Expense ratios include gross expenses and expenses net of contractual waiver as described in the Fund's current prospectus dated May 1, 2007. Parnassus Investments has contractually agred to limit the total operating expenses to 0.99% through April 30, 2008, exclusive of acquired fund fees.

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